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## RESEARCH ARTICLE

### GOVERNANCE AND DEVELOPMENT IN MIZORAM: A STUDY OF CHALLENGES AND PROSPECTS

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#### ABSTRACT

This study examines the key challenges pertaining to governance and development in the state of Mizoram. This paper elucidates the various reasons that impede the progress and advancement inside the State. The paper also analyzed the significant problems and constraints, while placing emphasis on showcasing the achievements and positive anecdotes that had facilitated the progress of the State. Additionally, it places emphasis on the potential of governance to facilitate socio-economic advancement. The paper underscores the importance of reevaluating the concept of governance in order to achieve improved governance and development.

## INTRODUCTION

In the preceding decade, Mizoram has experienced the effects of globalisation and the emergence of multiple agencies inside the region. The conventional system is beginning to experience the influence of modernization. The magnitude of transformation that had been accomplished through the attainment of statehood is so substantial that it had occurred abruptly, resulting in individuals finding it difficult to adapt to their new circumstances. The State has had little time to effectively transition into the new phase, characterised by a governance crisis. The phenomenon of transitioning from traditional to modern societal structures and cultures has undeniably resulted in the challenge of adapting and acculturating (Patnaik, 2019). James Coleman (2015) posits that the phenomenon known as the 'development syndrome' had become apparent throughout society, characterised by a multitude of simultaneous changes occurring. The initial assumption posits that the shift from a traditional societal structure to modernity was a significant contributing factor to the state's inadequate governance. For example, several states in India have undergone a gradual process of transition, ultimately leading to their evolution through the incorporation of countless revolutions and experiences spanning centuries.

In contrast, Mizoram has had limited experiences compared to other states in India. The culture and heritage of the Mizo community is perceived to have a relatively recent origin in comparison to other civilizations prevalent in India. Therefore, the evolution of society has facilitated its transition through multiple stages, culminating in the modern era. Some scholars argue that the State lacks the necessary time and procedural framework to effectively implement institutional changes required for the establishment of a stable society. The current situation has created challenges for the government apparatus in effectively promoting growth inside the state. The culture and customs of the Mizos continue to persist within their society, since they are still actively observed in their way of life. The encroachment of Western concepts of modernity and Christianity upon the cultural and traditional practises of the Mizo community has become apparent. The adoption of Western lifestyles and traditions, particularly in the city of Aizawl, became increasingly prevalent among individuals. The amalgamation of Mizo customs and culture with Western influences has resulted in a discernible decline in the significance of traditional practises. This has consequently led to a perception of the Mizo society as being less rooted in a firm cultural foundation, since traditional values, which once characterised their society as highly adaptable, have been

somewhat diminished. According to Chakraborty (2011), the influence of Christianity on the Mizo society was significant in terms of driving the transition from a primitive stage economy to a modern one. Additionally, it had evangelical impacts on various aspects of the Mizo society, including the introduction of Western enlightenment, rationality, education, scientific temper, morality, politics, and the ability to comprehend and internalise the Holy Spirit. The presence of British missionaries precipitated a transformation in the societal landscape, leading to the progressive modernization of cultural norms and practises. The erosion of indigenous cultural practises has resulted in significant alterations in the social structure and functioning of the Mizo community, leading to a state of disorientation (Downs, 1983). The transformation inside Mizo society has been predominantly perceived as a major shift towards convenience rather than development, resulting in a complex predicament between traditional values and modernity. The conventional social and economic framework of the society has been dismantled without adequate substitution. There have been arguments positing that the Mizo society lacked the necessary stability to retain its cultural values and customs, which are crucial for the effective implementation of governance within the community. The cultural domain of Mizo society exhibits a strong reflection of the process of modernization, while the economy of State remains in a state of extreme poverty and underdevelopment. This situation has placed the society in a position of tension, as it endeavours to achieve a harmonious equilibrium between these two aspects. The absence of modernity indicators suggests that structural changes in the economy cannot be classified as modernization. This phenomenon is widely seen as a significant barrier that had been firmly ingrained in society, leading to a deficiency in integrity, identification attributes, and fundamental cultural beliefs. Therefore, it can be argued that the influence exerted by these manipulative tactics on society spans across all strata, affecting both ordinary citizens and high-ranking officials alike, ultimately revealing the inherent weaknesses within the governance system.

In addition, the enduring impact of Western culture is evident in its contributions to society, namely in the realm of education and the dissemination of Christian teachings. According to the Statistical Handbook of Mizoram (2018), the current literacy rate in the state is at 91.33%, positioning it as the third highest in the nation. Furthermore, Christianity has significantly contributed to the socio-cultural advancement of the Mizo community. The church, seen as a significant institution within the civic society of Mizoram, holds considerable importance. The influence of Church is predominantly observed inside the state's governing framework. In addition to ecclesiastical institutions, several organisations arose as a result of the influence of Christianity. The Young Mizo Association (YMA), an influential CSO in the State, supplanted the old institution of Zawlbuk. According to Patnaik (2019), this particular organisation is recognised as an active civil society organisation that addressed the social and cultural needs of the Mizo society and community.

**Poor Governance: Problems and Causes:** The role of governance has progressively emerged as a significant tool for facilitating successful growth, performance, and development in contemporary society. Scholars and international institutions like the World Bank and IMF, have also garnered significant attention from governance and other institutions

(UK Essays, 2018). According to Kaufmann, there exist six prominent measures that would effectively measure the quality of governance, as outlined by Apaza (2009). Voice and accountability pertain to the engagement of civil society in the oversight and evaluation of political choices concerning civil and human rights.

- The concept of political instability is an analysis of the susceptibility of a government to undergo change as a result of violent threats or actions that deviated from constitutional norms.
- Government effectiveness refers to the assessment of the quality and competency of public workers in their delivery of services, encompassing their credibility and the efficacy of bureaucratic processes.
- Regulatory quality refers to the extent to which policies are conducive to fostering a favourable business environment.
- The Rule of Law encompasses the evaluation of law enforcement entities, such as the police and the courts, as well as the protection of property rights, with the aim of determining their resilience against criminal activities and violence.
- The concept of 'Control of Corruption' refers to the assessment of utilisation of governmental authority for personal benefits, encompassing acts of bribery and extortion.

According to Kaufmann's primary indicators, empirical data has indicated a tenuous correlation between governance and growth performance in the state of Mizoram. Mizoram has exhibited significant shortcomings in effectively embodying the attributes associated with effective governance. For example, inadequate governance has resulted in subpar economic growth, which is evident in the presence of corruption, insufficient enforcement of legal regulations, the fragility of institutional structures, and a lack of citizen engagement. This occurrence can frequently be attributed to the phenomenon of inadequate management of matters and suboptimal execution of policies by governmental officials and politicians. Furthermore, the lack of active participation and restricted involvement of individuals and Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) has emerged as a significant factor contributing to inadequate governance and development in Mizoram. The limited engagement of institutions in the governing system creates a significant void that impeded the progress of development within the State. Additionally, there is a discernible deterioration of moral principles across society, exacerbating the situation further.

In reality a significant disparity exists between individuals of high socioeconomic status and those of low socioeconomic status, accompanied by substantial regional imbalances between rural and urban locales. The governance system in Mizoram exhibits significant deficiencies mostly attributed to the presence of detrimental political practises, hence resulting in the erosion of institutional integrity and a decline in societal values at large. Despite having achieved statehood over 30 years ago, the state still faces significant challenges in attaining self-sufficiency across essential needs. The current condition of affairs has reached a critical level, necessitating a comprehensive restructuring of governance concepts and institutions to facilitate meaningful progress and growth. In essence, governance can be defined as the actions and functions undertaken by a government. Consequently, it becomes apparent that the potential of a government was

substantial enough to facilitate significant transformations, provided there is a determined intention to do so. Political parties often develop their own flagship initiatives, which they typically do not continue from the previous ministry's programmes. Examples of such programmes are the New Land Use Policy (NLUP) and the Mizoram Intodelh Programme (MIP) (Leblhuber & Vanlalhruaia, 2012). The current state of Mizoram showcases the endeavours undertaken by numerous ministries, which have established diverse plans aimed at the development of rural farmers across many sectors. However, these development plans have led to a deficiency in self-sufficiency in terms of food, power, and electricity, which remains a significant obstacle to the progress of Mizoram. Although there are some advantages that accrue to the underprivileged, the initiatives aimed at fostering economic growth in the State have not yet achieved a transformative effect. Regardless of any claims made regarding these initiatives, their fundamental goal was to establish farmers in long-term agricultural practises. Nevertheless, it is evident that the individuals residing in rural areas continued to experience poverty, and in some cases, have even witnessed a decline in their economic status.

Undoubtedly, there exists a noticeable lack of motivation to enact purposeful change, which is further compounded by a collective lack of initiative from political leaders, permanent administrative officials, and the general populace. The aforementioned problems are deeply ingrained throughout the governance structure of Mizoram, hence exacerbating the hindrances to the developmental process. Consequently, governance in the State persists in a state of inadequacy and inefficiency. The mismanagement of state economy has persisted, with a notable absence of efforts to provide a basis for socio-economic advancement. This lack of vision among state authorities hinders the development of state. According to Fukuyama (1999), Robert Putnam posited that the fundamental link between individuals, social networks, and the development of norms pertaining to reciprocity and trustworthiness is crucial, a concept he termed as 'social capital.' The author places emphasis on the role of both formal and informal institutions in facilitating the acquisition of skills and information, hence fostering a culture of engaged and enduring learning. Therefore, the establishment of social capital facilitates the formation of connections between individuals and organisations.

Mizoram exhibits a deficiency in the realm of social capital, characterised by a lack of connectedness and a prevailing self-interest among individuals who prioritise personal gains. For instance, it has been posited by certain scholars that there exist a waning inclination among individuals to strive for the attainment of effective government characterised by the collective pursuit of societal interests. The efficacy of both formal and informal institutions within the State is compromised in instances where corruption is pervasive inside the system. The repetition of identical promises and procedures, devoid of any substantial outcomes, has ultimately resulted in a waning of public interest. Consequently, individuals are fatigued and disillusioned with a system that fails to yield significant outcomes and knowledge acquisition within institutional settings. The lack of adequate developmental initiatives for advancement has led to a decline in public trust in the system. This has been accompanied by a rise in poverty and unemployment in rural areas, while a select few in urban regions have disproportionately benefited from

the system. According to Lalmanzuala (2003), the outcome of this situation led to dissatisfaction and a decline in trust towards the government. Consequently, many opt to maintain a state of silence and ignorance. Moreover, this phenomenon has resulted in the erosion of societal values and moral standards, hence contributing to a deteriorating governance system inside the State. Consequently, a culture of finger-pointing and assigning blame has emerged, as individuals within the society hold each other accountable for the underlying factors contributing to the State's inadequate governance.

**Major Causes of Poor Governance in Mizoram:** There exist several factors contributing to the prevalence of insufficient governance in Mizoram, encompassing leadership characterised by incompetence, ignorance, and limited capacity, alongside insufficiencies in infrastructure, corruption, and deficiencies in institutional frameworks, among others.

**Corruption:** Corruption, as commonly understood, refers to the act of embezzlement that lacks justification according to established norms, practises, or standards (Chakrabarty, 2016). This definition includes instances where public officials exploit their positions for personal gain. According to Chakrabarty (2016), Kautilya posits a strong connection between corruption and government. Corruption is widely recognised as a prevalent element that contributes to suboptimal governance within both the State and various institutional frameworks. The phenomenon under consideration manifests itself in diverse manifestations, encompassing acts such as bribery, extortion, nepotism, embezzlement, and the preferential allocation of public resources for political gain. Typically, it occurs when those holding public office engage in unlawful activities to obtain unauthorised advantages for their personal benefit. Political corruption is a pervasive phenomenon that is observed across various organisational structures. In the realm of politics, corruption poses a significant threat to the legitimacy of government, as it undermines democratic norms and erodes public trust. By violating fundamental principles, corruption also weakens the institutional capacity of government. According to Carl J Friedrich, corruption can be defined as a form of aberrant behaviour that involves seeking personal benefits at the expense of the public (Chakrabarty, 2016). Corruption can be understood as a form of transactional wrongdoing, in which a favour is granted in return for personal gains.

In the context of Mizoram, corruption has become deeply ingrained throughout the political system, thereby undermining significant public investment projects and diverting them towards private interests. This phenomenon has manifested itself in numerous government initiatives and programmes, wherein individuals in positions of authority and those involved in the decision-making process exploit their power for alternative objectives. It is a typical practice to allocate public funding towards capital projects in the majority of instances. Instances have arisen wherein authorities have manipulated the predicted costs of construction projects, such as roads and buildings. In these cases, the whole sum allocated for the intended purpose has not been created. These officials have orchestrated technical complications to obscure their actions, ultimately benefiting themselves personally.

In a parallel vein, exercise of power in the implementation of State public policy has resulted in a significant allocation of benefits to party personnel, while a substantial portion of qualified beneficiaries remain excluded from such advantages. This factor has emerged as a significant obstacle in attaining a favourable result in contrast to the established policies. The system has experienced an excessive degree of party politics, favouritism, and nepotism. Corruption is prevalent in various aspects of employment recruiting, including the selection of candidates, assignment of work locations, and promotion processes, where bribery, political favouritism, and nepotism play significant roles. The State is characterised by a pervasive culture of favouritism in its political landscape, wherein political activities have become distorted to the extent that monies allocated for public welfare are disproportionately directed towards party workers. Additionally, party workers have gained significant control over the acquisition of modest contracts for the reconstruction of public infrastructure and implementation of various projects across different locations. Therefore, this form of corruption occurs within a system that significantly manipulates the entirety of development process. The majority of financial resources are allocated towards the advantages of a select few individuals, often at the expense of the broader population. The current state of affairs is particularly concerning given the prevalent and severe financial crisis.

Corruption pervades various sectors, including government entities, private industries, and organisations, where practises such as bribery, nepotism, and the abuse of power for personal gain are prevalent. It is apparent that corruption arises from a multifaceted process in which the efficacy of governance does not meet the anticipated standards. The burden of corruption is not solely borne by public officials; rather, the public also bears a significant degree of responsibility in undermining the governance system. Therefore, eradication of corruption is a complex and time-consuming endeavour that cannot be achieved swiftly. However, the onus of preventing corruption lies with every individual, as this collective effort can ultimately promote effective governance within the State.

**Weak Institutions:** Institutions play a pivotal role in both undermining and boosting the performance of governance. According to Douglas North (1990), the impact of institutions and institutional change on economic performance is significant, both in the short term and in the long term. Whether it pertains to religious, educational, or social institutions, the concept of good governance can be adopted as a fundamental policy and strategic approach. In this regard, it is important to note that the administration of public affairs extends beyond the purview of government, since the concept of governance transcends the boundaries of public sector. Hence, the engagement of diverse stakeholders and distinct organisations is vital for the regulation of many facets of society. The government, commercial sector, and civil society collectively form the fundamental components of institutional governance structures. The involvement and participation of major stakeholders in governance are essential components of the governance system. According to Louise Frechette, the Deputy Secretary General of the United Nations, governance is not a unilateral action undertaken by the state against society, but rather a process by which society and its constituent members collectively manage many facets of their communal existence. Therefore, it is apparent that governance encompasses a multitude of institutions, with government

being a prominent player and institution within the realm of governance. The current and proactive involvement of these institutions within the governance framework facilitates a governance system that is both efficient and transparent. Therefore, institutions and their actors hold significant significance within society. However, in the event that these institutions lack strength and their participation is inconspicuous within the framework of governance, it can result in governance that is weak. In the context of Mizoram, it is seen that certain institutions demonstrate a lack of active awareness of the governance system, or alternatively, exhibit a tendency to refrain from engaging with the governance system, instead prioritising their interests. Consequently, by maintaining a distance from the prevailing circumstances, individuals fail to provide sufficient opportunities for the advancement and progress of the State. For example, Mizo Zirlai Pawl (MZP) exhibits assertive behaviour and responses occasionally in various situations pertaining to the well-being of pupils, as well as to some extent in relation to matters of race. Nevertheless, it is noteworthy that there is a conspicuous lack of discussion regarding the significant problem of alcohol-related issues. This matter has become a cause for concern among a considerable portion of the population, as the state has witnessed a distressing rise in mortality rates attributed to excessive alcohol consumption, particularly among young individuals and members of the police force. The MLPC Act of Mizoram has had a significant impact on numerous families. The Mizoram Presbyterian Church, Synod Social Front, did a comprehensive study on the prevalence of alcohol abuse and its associated problems. According to a statement by Vanglaini (2017), it has been determined that from 2013 to July 2017, there were a total of 1,070 recorded deaths attributed to complications arising from excessive alcohol use. However, the MZP does not elicit any apprehensions when addressing the situation.

According to Vanlaltlana(2020), the President of the MZP, it was expressed that the organisation has adopted a neutral stance and intends to abstain from involvement in the situation concerning the liquor prohibition and control legislation. The individual additionally expressed that the MZP is not involved in this matter and hence places trust in the government to resolve the issue in a peaceful manner for the betterment of populace. Furthermore, Thanga (2020), the Vice President of the Mizoram Upa Pawl (MUP), further asserts that organisations such as MUP strive to collaborate with the government and respond to matters in which only government policies are contrary to the well-being of populace. The individual posited that, in relation to governmental laws and regulations, they align themselves with the government and opt to abstain from engaging in political affairs. Consequently, individuals defer the responsibility of addressing such issues to the government. The current state of affairs suggests that leaders within the civil society, namely those affiliated with non-governmental organisations (NGOs), have become preoccupied with pursuing their own personal interests from the government. Consequently, this has resulted in a decline in their effectiveness in promoting good governance and accountability. Indeed, it can be argued that civil society organisations clandestinely engage in compromising arrangements with the government, resulting in a notable lack of governance accountability among the broader society. The civil society is inherently intertwined with government agencies. The aforementioned form of compromise between the civil society and government inherently diminishes the

level of accountability in governance. According to Lalengkima (2017), it has been noted by a certain author that when civil society aligns itself with the government, the liberty and safety of individuals may be put at risk. The significance of different institutions, particularly informal institutions, is crucial as they function as input mechanisms within the political system. Therefore, it became necessary to reassess institutions such as Civil Society Organisations in order to promote the well-being of society and enhance the State's governance accountability. The strengthening of Institutions is strongly emphasised for governance of the state. Therefore, matters have to be addressed in terms of more investment in education and civic engagement so as to empower citizens with knowledge and the ability to participate in the democratic process.

**Lack of Integrity:** Mizoram is a region characterised by a predominantly homogeneous population and a tightly-knit social fabric. The Mizo people's culture and society continue to uphold ancient practises and principles of community life, despite the absence of social classes (Patnaik, 2019). The cohesive nature of the Mizo society functions as a fundamental source of its resilience and stability. In this context, the State has fostered a harmonious society characterised by peaceful coexistence and a seamless implementation of egalitarian principles. These factors have significantly contributed to the cohesive nature of society, shaping both the mindset and lifestyle of its members. Nevertheless, prevalence of this homogeneous nature has had a discernible impact on lawmakers, authorities, and the populace at large. The Mizo people are commonly perceived as being highly susceptible to external influences and displaying a propensity for forming quick and strong attachments.

To a significant degree, they exhibit a deficiency in possessing robust moral principles. In the scenario where a neighbour or friend is engaged in a pursuit, they mutually inspire and motivate one another across several domains. This characteristic is ingrained into their cognitive framework, resulting in a disposition towards nonchalant attitudes and lax ethical standards, thereby leading to a deficiency in self-regulation. The younger generations, in particular, exhibit a notable embodiment of the absence of integrity in their manner of living. The lack of motivation and effort among individuals within this group to pursue and achieve achievement has resulted in their relative weakness compared to other societies. Therefore, absence of integrity persists inside the organisational work culture. The prevalence of integrity deficits and widespread corruption has been ingrained in societal norms. Hence, the acceptance of inadequate governance within the system may be observed. Building integrity takes time and effort, but it is a crucial aspect of personal growth and ethical living. Thus, to address a lack of integrity in the system, the revival and re-introduction of Mizo's cultural values and core values such as "Tlawmngaihna" and the practice of honesty being inspired by the teaching of our Christian value have to be practice with zeal and sincerity.

**Ignorance:** The prevalence of ignorance has been identified as a further contributing element to the governance observed within the State. The phrase 'ignorance' pertains to the absence of knowledge and information among a significant portion of the general public, leading to a deficiency in

understanding and awareness regarding appropriate matters (Merriam-Webster, 2023). Mizoram is characterised by a significant level of poverty, with over half of its people residing in rural regions that have yet to see the effects of modernization on their way of life. For example, individuals often maintain an idealistic perspective and exhibit a lack of understanding, particularly when it comes to their responsiveness and involvement in promoting good governance for the purpose of achieving successful growth. Political parties frequently exploit the innocence and lack of understanding of individuals, particularly during election campaigns. This is particularly evident in the context of those with lower socioeconomic status, as they are more susceptible to being influenced by monetary incentives. Similar dynamics can also be observed in the conduct of other public officials. As a result of their lack of awareness as informed individuals, they frequently express admiration for instances of bribery. Consequently, this issue has emerged as a significant obstacle inside the system, leading to ineffective governance as a result of the prevailing lack of knowledge or awareness.

However, conversely, ignorance is also prevalent in metropolitan regions, particularly in cities where individuals tend to maintain a passive stance towards political matters. A significant proportion of individuals residing in urban areas opt to disengage from political pressures by prioritising their demanding personal lives, resulting in a lack of awareness regarding the occurrences within the political system. The current situation is characterised by a significant level of apathy and disengagement among individuals, resulting in their reluctance to voice their opinions, take action, and actively contribute to the functioning of the political system. There is a noticeable decline in public trust towards political leaders, who play a central role in the process of governance, among a significant portion of urban populations. Hence, the apathy and lack of knowledge exhibited by individuals towards the governance system have facilitated the gradual emergence of inadequate governance inside the State. Thus, to promote cooperation and active citizens on the part of sound governance, public awareness campaign through social media and online campaigns so as to highlight social issues. Moreover, in today's world, the practice of public-private partnership and collaborations with non-governmental organizations, community groups and like-minded individuals would amplify the efforts.

**Inefficiency in Leadership:** Plato held the belief that democracy was an unfavourable system, as he perceived it as a precursor to tyranny, granting authority to self-interested and hazardous demagogues (Forthomme, 2019). It is challenging to withhold dissent from Plato's viewpoints, particularly when considering the contemporary state of democratic societies. Democracy has been subject to substantial criticism due to its perceived tendency to yield a surplus of inept and untrustworthy political leaders that manipulate individuals' biases and emotions through deceptive pledges and inconsistency. In a similar vein, political leaders in Mizoram effectively articulate compelling pledges to the electorate throughout their campaigns and during the electoral period. However, it is often observed that subsequent to a span of several months, the victorious candidate and political parties consistently fall short in fulfilling their pledges, hence causing disillusionment among the populace. It is evident that their primary focus lies in pursuing popularity rather than prioritising the implementation of enduring projects with

sustained advantages. It is evident that administrations in power consistently prioritise the provision of improved road networks, infrastructure development, and the advancement of agricultural communities, among other initiatives. However, these policies fail to effectively utilise the given time and resources, resulting in their eventual dissolution. According to Lalmanzuala (2003), genuine development should be evaluated based on the provision of public utilities such as roads, power, water supply, and other essential services. It appears that Mizoram is now facing significant deficiencies in these areas, but those who are affluent and influential seem to have access to a wide range of amenities and luxuries. Indeed, it is evident that political leaders exhibit a dearth of visionary qualities, as they persistently address a multitude of issues in a repetitive manner, neglecting the vital aspect of long-term perspective planning. Furthermore, empirical studies have demonstrated that the primary factors contributing to ineptitude and inefficiency among leaders are primarily attributed to insufficient preparation and a lack of expertise within the respective profession. There is a contention that individuals of affluent and renowned standing in society are afforded opportunities to run for office solely based on their riches and celebrity, without due consideration of their true capabilities or their willingness to make sacrifices for the betterment of the public. The majority of political leaders exhibit a lack of sincerity and seriousness in their endeavours to implement their agendas. Individuals are primarily motivated by the acquisition of status and power, which ultimately leads to the manipulation of the entire system and subsequently weakens governance, so negatively impacting societal growth. To underline this major issue, the proactive approach from like-minded persons to address inefficiency by keeping records of inefficiencies, including dates, examples and impacts would be efficient. By navigating this approach, the politics of inefficiency can be dealt with in the long run.

**Rule of Law is weak:** In nations with democratic systems such as India, the principle of 'Rule of Law' holds significant constitutional importance. The provision of equality to all individuals is ensured by Article 14 of the Constitution. The statement suggests that all individuals under the jurisdiction of India are bound by the legal system and ensures the principle of legal equality or equitable protection under the law. The concept of the rule of law pertains to the manner in which political authority is used. According to the renowned ancient Greek philosopher Aristotle, it is asserted that the governance of society should be guided by the principles of law (ROL Alliance, 2016). Therefore, the principle of the rule of law entails that both legislators and government officials are subject to legal accountability, thereby contradicting the notion that the ruler possesses immunity from legal constraints. The aforementioned phrase suggests that all individuals, including legislators and government officials, are obligated to adhere to and be held responsible for the legal framework. In this context, the principle of rule of law promotes governance through a democratic system. This stands in opposition to forms of governance such as dictatorship, autocracy, and oligarchy, where those in positions of power and authority operate outside the boundaries of legal oversight. The governance of rule of law is commonly referred to as 'nomocracy,' derived from the Greek terms 'nomos' (law) and 'kratos' (rule) (ROL Alliance, 2016). Therefore, it may be argued that democracy is strongly associated with governance based on the rule of law.

Nevertheless, the adherence and enforcement of the rule of law in Mizoram, like in many other regions, deviate from the prescribed legal framework established by the Constitution. The concept of the Rule of Law has garnered significant attention in contemporary discourse. Within this particular framework, the term 'law' encompasses more than only legislation enacted by governing bodies. Numerous implicit social norms dictate our personal and communal spheres. Indeed, adherence to and compliance with a law is vital for all individuals, both on an individual and collective basis, as well as for the State. However, it seems that the notion of rule of law is intended exclusively for individuals in positions of authority. It has been seen that the administrative authorities persistently engage in the violation or circumvention of regulations. Consequently, those of ordinary means encounter significant challenges in attaining equitable treatment and legal recourse. There is evidence to suggest that the application of laws was not uniform across all individuals. There exists a significant disparity in the enforcement of laws between individuals of high socio-economic status and those of low socioeconomic status. The enforcement of regulations is disproportionately stringent on individuals of lower socioeconomic status, while those who are financially privileged are able to navigate the system more readily by means of bribery. Money and riches exert significant influence in the realm of law. As a result of the amendment to the Mizoram Liquor Prohibition and Control (MLPC) Act, Mizoram has once again been officially designated as a dry state under the administration of the Mizo National Front (MNF) ministry. Although individuals with wealth have the means to illicitly import and use alcohol from other states, the region of Rangvamaal in Mizoram, where alcohol production and sales are prevalent, exhibits stringent law enforcement and imposes harsh consequences. Although the production and sale of alcohol are prohibited within the State, there is a lack of consistent enforcement of these regulations. For example, individuals engaged in the sale of alcoholic beverages are subject to significant financial penalties and may occasionally be incarcerated. The affluent and influential individuals discreetly engage in the importation of alcoholic beverages from foreign countries with relative ease, circumventing domestic regulations. In contrast, it is seen that the enforcement of rules is not consistently upheld over all time periods. Rather, there appears to be a selective adherence to laws for a limited duration, followed by subsequent relaxation within the system. Consequently, this has engendered a sense of nonchalance and disregard towards individuals. Consequently, this has facilitated the emergence of inadequate governance inside the State. Thus, for law to prevail in the governance system, all citizens have to have equal access to the legal system, regardless of their socio-economic status. Legal aid and education programs can help ensure that the rule of law is accessible to all. Thus, for that matter, establishment of professional, ethical and well-trained law enforcement agencies is emphasised. Further, the active engagement and participation of civil society organizations, non-governmental organizations and the media to monitor and advocate the rule of law is strongly encouraged.

**Issues and Challenges in Governance in Mizoram:** The society is confronted with several significant issues that contribute to the prevalence of inadequate governance, hence impacting its overall quality. The detrimental effects of inadequate governance within the State have significantly hindered the economic growth in a highly consequential

manner. It has been aptly emphasised that the absence of effective governance within a State hinders any form of progress. The growth and development of the State have been impacted by bad governance in multiple ways. Mizoram's current state of underdevelopment has resulted in its relative lag behind other states in India across several developmental domains. The aforementioned issues within the governing system have adverse implications for the socio-economic progress of the State.

### **The majority of the critical ones can be identified as follows**

**Insufficient progress in agricultural development:** Mizoram is well recognised as a predominantly rural economy, wherein around 60% of the populace relies on agriculture as the primary means of sustenance (Economic Survey – Government of Mizoram, 2019). In the preeminent era of agriculture in the State, multiple governmental bodies had undertaken initiatives encompassing development programmes and policies aimed at fostering agricultural expansion and facilitating economic advancement. Policies such as the New Land Use Policy (NLUP) and the Mizoram Intodelh Programme (MIP) have been specifically designed to address the needs of farmers and rural sectors. These policies have been implemented and executed to provide benefits to the intended beneficiaries. However, the outcomes did not meet the expected standards as outlined in the policies and plan. The excessive presence of party politics, nepotism, and corruption has likely contributed to a suboptimal implementation process, resulting in weakened governance outcomes. The implementation and execution of policies lack seriousness. In certain regions, there may exist a limited number of associations that had been designated with the responsibility of overseeing and regulating the aforementioned process. However, the level of participation and involvement of civil societies in the government system is minimal. Despite the presence of sound policies, it is widely believed that the practical implementation of these policies for the development of State is hindered due to a significant neglect of governance. The lack of effective governance hinders the progress of agricultural development, resulting in the ongoing reliance of the State on substantial imports from other regions within India. Hence, the attainment of optimum productivity in development remains elusive, and the optimal utilisation of resources deviates from the intended plan.

**No Market Facilities:** Mizoram possesses a diverse array of natural resources and is characterised by its abundant flora and fauna. There is a prevailing belief that the State has not effectively exploited its available resources for development purposes. Several crops, including banana, tobacco leaves, and oil palm, are cultivated extensively throughout the State and yield substantial harvests annually. However, farmers encounter difficulties in selling their produce in the market. The absence of a comprehensive market system is primarily responsible for this situation. Consequently, this has created challenges for farmers in effectively marketing their crops at a favourable price. Farmers are required to seek external third-party entities in order to sell their gathered crops. Hence, it might be argued that their costs are not justifiably elevated, as the value derived from their labour and dedication often does not correspondingly align with the cost. Furthermore, it is worth noting that rural farmers lack access to adequate cold storage facilities. Consequently, there has been a significant

detriment to the quality and quantity of their produced commodities prior to their sale in the marketplace. An additional concern pertains to the network system, whereby the substandard state of roads poses challenges in the transportation of commodities and products to various locations. The aforementioned issues serve as indications of the insufficient endeavours made by the politician and officials. As a consequence, the rural farming community has seen significant negative impacts as a result of a lack of accountability in government.

**Poor Transportation:** Efficient and accessible transit options offer advantages in terms of time efficiency and reduced energy expenditure, hence benefiting individuals. Transportation is of utmost importance in contemporary society, since it significantly influences the daily routines and tasks of individuals. Transportation via various modes such as air travel, maritime vessels, railways, and roadways is the prevalent means by which daily activities are conducted. Hence, the provision of efficient transport infrastructure is vital for the overall well-being of individuals. In Mizoram, transit remains a significant challenge, particularly in rural regions. The limited geographical expanse of Mizoram, spanning 21,081 square kilometres, has resulted in a very underdeveloped transport infrastructure (Statistical Handbook Mizoram, 2018). The lack of adequate rural connectivity, infrastructure, and amenities hinders the implementation of necessary measures. As a result, numerous rural regions remained disconnected from various development initiatives. Furthermore, the construction of roads in rural Mizoram is characterised by substandard quality, resulting in regular difficulties in accessing different areas. Road conditions in Mizoram are generally unfavourable, characterised by a lack of maintenance and extensive damage, resulting in the frequent occurrence of potholes. This issue persists throughout the year, offering little to no positive aspects to be highlighted. Particularly during the rainy season, the duration of the voyage from Aizawl to Lunglei exceeded seven hours, when under regular circumstances, it typically spans a mere five hours. The aforementioned observation suggests that roads are created using cost-effective methods, resulting in a very limited lifespan.

According to the findings of the Economics and Statistics department (2018), there are now 52 villages that lack access to rural road connectivity. This absence of infrastructure may hinder the potential for development in these areas. It is evident that the reach of development is limited, since it fails to encompass a substantial portion of the population. Furthermore, the distribution of development is not equitable, with disparities observed between rural and urban areas. A significant disparity and inequality exist between rural and urban regions. The aforementioned challenges predominantly develop as a result of ineffective and inept leadership. During the electoral period, the individuals in question made deceptive commitments to the electorate. However, ultimately, the anticipated benefits of growth failed to reach the impoverished and rural populations. The rural population inside the State has been significantly impacted as a result of inadequate governance.

**Inadequate supply of Power and Electricity:** In a manner analogous to transportation, the provision of power and energy assumes a paramount significance in ensuring the well-being of individuals.

In the context of an increasingly interconnected global society, the majority of activities are predominantly reliant on the utilisation of power and energy. Nevertheless, Mizoram continues to rely on other states for its electricity supply. The region has consistently imported a significant quantity of electricity from adjacent states on a monthly basis. According to the Statistical Handbook Mizoram (2018), the electricity consumption of the State is anticipated to be 110 MW. However, the State is currently only able to generate 10 MW of its own power, with the remaining amount being imported from surrounding States. Despite the passage of three decades since achieving statehood, there continues to be a deficit in power supply that hinders the ability to meet the overall demand. A number of hydroelectric projects in Mizoram fail to adequately meet the power demands of the state's whole population. Furthermore, it is worth noting that there exist numerous locations within the state of Mizoram where a significant portion of the population still lacks access to power and energy. The government has consistently undertaken projects for the State. Nevertheless, to date, there has been a lack of substantial results observed. Consequently, the State continues to experience significant challenges in power and electricity provision, mostly attributable to ineffective leadership and inadequate institutional capacity.

**Poor Infrastructure and Technology:** The detrimental impact of inadequate governance in the State has significantly hindered the progress of infrastructural and technical advancements. Contrary to expectations, it is considered that the growth and development process of the State falls short of the anticipated level, particularly when compared to the development trajectory observed in other states, particularly those in the North East region. To this day, the state continues to have a deficiency in self-sufficiency across several fundamental amenities, necessitating significant reliance on imports from neighbouring states. Silchar serves as the primary access point via which various items and essential commodities are moved on a regular basis. In the event of any issues or disruptions arising from specific inconveniences, the inflow of goods and services into Mizoram would cease automatically. This phenomenon significantly affects individuals' daily life in terms of essential commodities such as raw materials, food supplies, oil, and petrol, among others.

Therefore, it is apparent that Mizoram exhibits a significant lack of basic facilities and infrastructure, rendering it far from being self-sufficient. Furthermore, as a result of inadequate industrial infrastructure, Mizoram lacks significant commodities for export and distribution to other states. The issue at hand has persisted from the inception of the Statehood era. Despite the implementation of numerous big and minor development initiatives, the State has exhibited a persistent lack of progress in addressing its longstanding difficulties over its more than three decades of Statehood. However, the ultimate outcome consistently appears to be unsatisfactory. The State has not effectively harnessed its potential for implementing a beneficial mechanism. The adverse effects of corruption and societal illiteracy have significantly impeded the progress of development thus far. However, when comparing the current period to the early period, it is evident that the State has made significant advancements in multiple domains. However, it has been demonstrated that this outcome can be attributed solely to the financial support and assistance offered by the Central government. From a technical standpoint, it may be argued that the State lacks independent

means of sustenance. The money allocated by the Central government are mostly utilised for the implementation of diverse development initiatives and the disbursement of government service remunerations. Therefore, it appears that there is no remaining surplus available for allocation towards other requirements. In actuality, the State administration consistently faces budgetary constraints and limited financial resources, leaving it without any internal means of generating revenue. The adverse effects of poor governance have significantly hindered the progress and advancement of the State in a detrimental manner. Despite the State's gradual progress towards development, there exist significant obstacles that impede growth in a substantial manner. From a scholarly standpoint, it is imperative to ensure that the theory of public policy aligns with the specific requirements of a state in order to facilitate a conducive climate for both good governance and growth. This necessitates a cautious and meticulous implementation of the theory in practise. This will facilitate the establishment of a more adaptive structure of government. In this context, the imperative nature of the intimate connection between the States and citizen engagement is evident.

**Possible remedial measures:** From an empirical research standpoint and drawing upon considerable literature, it is evident that Mizoram has experienced a prolonged period of isolation. Consequently, traditional activities continue to hold sway in the society, with a significant portion of the population displaying resistance towards embracing change. Agriculture serves as the primary and central pillar of the economy. For example, it is possible to involve the jhum settlers in productive vocations by providing them the necessary training in various trades, expanding market opportunities, and implementing infrastructure development initiatives. Dedicated endeavours can be undertaken in this regard, wherein proactive measures from implementing entities and stakeholders can be focused on this issue. The rural population in the local area is in great need of guidance and attention prior to the implementation of any developmental initiatives. In order to achieve comprehensive development and address disparities in regional development, it is advisable to harness local skills (Agarwal, 2003).

Conversely, the State exhibits a significant reliance on the Central governments in order to fulfil resource requirements for various developmental endeavours. In contrast, the availability of employment positions within the government sector is notably restricted, concurrently accompanied by instances of excessive personnel and operational ineffectiveness throughout diverse governmental divisions. In order to achieve this objective, it is imperative to foster entrepreneurship within the local community, while simultaneously expanding the provision of necessary infrastructure (Agarwal, 2003). In order to enhance the quality of life and foster self-sufficiency, it is imperative to promote the active involvement of the younger generation in skilled and semi-skilled pursuits. The adoption of a self-employment plan is necessary. In recent times, there has been a noticeable emergence of small-scale and community-based entrepreneurs in the market. These individuals offer a diverse range of homemade food and handcrafted items, mostly targeting local consumers.

To promote their products, these entrepreneurs rely on social media platforms as a means of self-advertisement. Demonstrating support and encouragement for such activities



is likely to yield additional advantages and enhance productivity in terms of the market value of economic activity within the state. In the present context, it is imperative to implement substantial reforms within the educational system in order to address the prevailing scarcity of skilled workforce across many sectors of the economy. In order to address the technological requirements across many sectors of the economy, a significant influx of individuals from external regions is employed. In this context, it is crucial to adequately equip and educate young individuals within the local community to meet the specific requirements and expectations of diverse industries. This will effectively address the shortage of skilled professionals and contribute to the overall economic development of the state. In the current context, there is a significant increase in the population migrating from adjacent states and international boundaries. The individuals in question are obligated to engage in specific tasks and responsibilities, as the Mizos have made substantial financial contributions towards their endeavours. The allocation of substantial financial resources to individuals outside the Mizoram community, including non-Mizos, has resulted in the potential for these activities to be performed by Mizos themselves. It is imperative to foster self-sufficiency in the provision of manpower, taking into consideration the economic reliance of our State on Central support.

## CONCLUSION

Mizoram has encountered a prolonged era of inadequate governance, resulting in significant setbacks in terms of growth. Contrarily, there are specific characteristics that have contributed to the improvement of government performance and the facilitation of socio-economic growth. The state possesses distinctive characteristics, as it emanates an appearance of tranquilly and harmony within the territory (Patnaik, 2019). Furthermore, it is evident that the rate of progress in Mizoram surpasses that of its bordering states. Mizoram exhibits promising prospects for development across multiple domains, necessitating the state government's earnest endeavours to harness its inherent resources and establish self-sustaining revenue streams. Mizoram possesses a significant strategic advantage due to its geographical location in the North Eastern region of India. The region possesses a fertile soil system, characterised by its ability to support robust agricultural production. Additionally, the area benefits from a mild climate, which contributes to favourable growing conditions. Furthermore, the region boasts a rich cultural history, encompassing a diverse range of traditions, customs, and historical significance. Moreover, the political environment of the region is characterised by a state of peaceful coexistence and stability. Furthermore, it is noteworthy that the literacy rate in the State is currently the third highest in India, following Kerala and Lakshadweep. Moreover, the presence of the Church institution has conferred a distinct advantage by assuming the role of a guardian and watchdog for the State. Despite the numerous benefits, the State administration has thus far been unable to effectively harness the potential resources in a strategic fashion. Therefore, from a research standpoint, it may be argued that the State possesses the capacity to create its own revenue, in addition to the substantial financing provided by the Central government.

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