

## The Press in Mizoram: A View from the Perimeter

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### Abstract

*The mass media is not solely influenced by the industrialised culture, may be, because of the location or the population or for a constructive competition. Media of Mizoram, a hilly Indian state nestled in the north eastern part, is under such category, where a small number of people enjoy a large number of media at their doorstep. The research is basically a combination of qualitative and quantitative analyses. The researchers have tried to find out the roots of journalism in Mizoram, more particularly the present scenario of Print media industry in the state. The present status of the press in Mizoram is far from satisfactory. The circulation is limited so also the advertising revenue. In the absence of any industrial or corporate support, newspapers in Mizoram mostly have to depend upon the government support.*

**Keywords:** Print Media, Mizoram, circulation and Advertising Revenue

### Introduction:

The present industrialized world has been dominated by the modern mass media. **Jennifer Akin** has mentioned in an article that the television in the living room, the newspaper on the doorstep, the radio in the car, the computer at work, and the fliers in the mailbox are just a few of the media channels daily delivering advertisements, news, opinion, music, and other information from nook and corner of the globe. The agenda setting role of the media has either positively or negatively influenced the general masses. Not only do the media report the news, they create the news by deciding what to

report. The “top story” of the day has to be picked from the millions of things that happened that particular day. After something is deemed newsworthy, there are decisions on how much time or space to give it, whom to interview, what pictures to use, and how to frame it (Akin, 2005). Although these decisions are supposed to be taken by the editor or his subordinate colleagues, but now the opinion of the management dominates the role of the editor. These are now depending upon the interest of the management of the media house and the market value of those particular news products. But still there are places, where

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the mass media is not solely influenced by the industrialised culture, may be, because of the location or the population or for a constructive competition. Media of Mizoram, a hilly Indian state nestled in the north eastern part, is under such category, where a small number of people enjoy a large number of media at their doorstep.

**Objective:** The main objective of the present article is to present a bird's eye view of the media in Mizoram.

**Methodology:** The research is basically a combination of qualitative and quantitative analyses. The researchers have tried to find out the roots of journalism in Mizoram, more particularly the present scenario of media industry in the state.

To collect the primary data, the researcher's assistant visited Mizoram in March, 2012 and stayed in Aizawl for four days. He visited the office of the Directorate of Information and Public Relation, Govt. of Mizoram and interviewed the officials including the Director. He also visited twenty-two newspaper houses based in Aizawl, where the sample comprises of daily newspapers, weekly newspapers, and monthly magazines published in Mizo and English languages. He has personally interviewed the editors or publishers of these media houses to gather information on the history of their newspaper, present status, circulation, employees, advertising revenue, editorial policy and media economics.

For the secondary data, the researcher has not received any formal documents on the media of Mizoram. He has visited several times the official website of the state government, DIPR, Press Information Bureau, Registrar of Newspapers for India and Prasar Bharati. The researcher browsed through several books and official documents, which included the census reports, statistics of the State and annual reports.

### History

The first newspaper to be published from the state was '*Laisuih*'. *Mizo Chanchin Laisuih* was the first Mizo journal edited by Captain J. Shakespeare, then Assistant Political Officer/ Superintendent of the Lushai Hills which was published in August, 1898. It was a handwritten cyclostyled tabloid which was soon substituted by a monthly journal, '*Mizo leh Vai Chanchin Lehkhabu*' published again by Captain J. Shakespeare. It was the most consistent and regular monthly journal in Mizo dialect edited by Makthanga during 1911-1936. The 14-pages journal included human interest stories and activities of the government. It was soon followed by '*Kristian Tlangau*' in 1911, a monthly mouthpiece of the Presbyterian Mission from Aizawl, now the highest circulated monthly magazine in Mizoram.

The first printing press 'Loch Printing Press' later changed to 'Synod Press' was established in 1911. There was emergence of a community-oriented magazine in

1934, by Baptist Mission of Lunglei named as 'Tlawmngaihna'. Another such monthly published by the Baptist Church of Serkawn in 1947 was 'Kohhran Beng' still in circulation. 'LSA' (later Mizo Zirlai Pawl or MZP), a monthly mouthpiece of the Lushai Students' Association made its appearance in September 1938. It consisted of literary writings, current affairs, patriotic articles and was first edited by L.H Liana. The first Mizo weekly magazine '*Tun Hapta Chanchin*' appeared in September 1939 edited by Liankhuma. In the same year '*Nitin Chanchinbu*', the first daily newspaper was published by A.G Mc Call, then Superintendent of Lushai Hills. In September 1946, the first Mizo political journal named as '*Mizo Chanchinbu*', co-edited by Thanhlira, Thanbuaia and Lalthlamuana was published; soon followed by '*Zoram Thupuan*' in 1947 and '*Mizo Arsi*' in 1948 (Pandey, 2013. p. 140).

However, the first English newspaper was '*Highlander*' on September 7, 1972 and '*Mizoram Udaya*' was the first Hindi weekly newspaper in Lunglei district. It was first published on December 20, 2010. There was a growth of journalism in Mizoram from 1990 onwards as a number of newspapers and journals made its appearance. At present, there are about 100 Mizo dialect daily newspapers with around 200 full-time journalists. '*Newslink*', '*Mizoram Post*' and '*Highlander*' are the three prominent English dailies of the state. '*Vanglaini*', started in 1978, is now the largest circulated daily newspaper, '*Lelte*', an entertainment-oriented magazine is the

largest circulated weekly magazine and '*Lengzem*' is the largest circulated monthly magazine. Many government organizations also publish their journals like '*Hriselna*' (by Directorate of Health Services), '*Thu leh Hla*' (mouthpiece of Mizo Academy of Letters) and '*Meichher*' (by Mizo Adult Education Wing) (Pandey, 2013. p. 141).

### Present Status

As per the report of Registrar of Newspapers for India (RNI), there are 184 total registered newspapers and other periodicals in Mizoram. Among these, there are 44 dailies, 7 tri-weeklies, 47 weeklies, 8 bi-weeklies, 6 fortnightlies, 55 monthlies, 8 bi-monthlies, 5 quarterlies, three yearly publications and one is published half-yearly. Most of the newspapers are published in Mizo language that number 150. The second highest are bilingual publications numbering 14, followed by English newspapers, 8 in number. There are also four multilingual newspapers. Interestingly, two Assamese newspapers are also published in Mizoram. In addition, two newspapers are published in Nepali, two in other languages, one in Hindi and one in Lushai language. On the other hand, the Directorate of Information and Public Relations of the State has informed the researcher that at present there are 90 newspapers, 5 weeklies and 16 monthly periodicals in the State.

As mentioned, these 184 newspapers are published and registered under RNI in different years of publication. There

was only one newspaper published in the 1950s while two in 1960s. The number increased to 23 in the 1970s. There was a huge increase of 52 newspapers published in 1980-90. But from 1990, the number decreased to 46. Interestingly, 29 newspapers were published in 2000-2010 and another 29 newspapers evolved from 2010 to 2013.

Various locations of different publications of media are districts of Aizawl, Lunglei, Saiha, Serchhip, Lawngtlai, Mamit, Kolasib and Champhai. Most newspapers are published in Aizawl itself, i.e. 153 in number. Twelve newspapers are published from Lunglei and 3 from Champhai. One newspaper each is published from Siaha, Lawngtlai, Kolasib, Kawnpui, and Lunglei and two from Chhimtuipui. Three newspapers are published from different States of India - one each from Assam (Guwahati), Manipur and Tamil Nadu.

But the actual scenario of the media of Mizoram is quite different from the data collected. The main observations of the researchers on the print media of the state are:

- a) Most of the print publications of Mizoram are of vernacular language, particularly in Mizo.
- b) Most of the newspapers published from the State consist of 8 pages format and many newspapers are single sheeted publications.
- c) Besides these, maximum newspapers of the state are of black and white editions. The first English daily of the State is Highlander is also a black and white newspaper. But newspapers like *Vanglaini*, the *Aizawl Post* and *Mizoram Post* have colour editions.
- d) Although the number of published newspapers and periodicals is very high, the researcher has found that maximum newspapers are not published at regular intervals, i.e. daily or weekly.
- e) A large number of newspapers are published from the individual houses of the publisher or the editor with a small room.
- f) With competition on the rise, the principle of 'survival of the fittest' has seemed to set in particularly in the capital city. From the previous 40 or so government approved newspapers, the number has come down to 26 in Aizawl, 9 in Lunglei and 7 in Chhimtuipui districts. An interesting development, of late, is the increase of news magazines. News magazines of sports, music and others have come up in large numbers, of about 35 or more in Aizawl (Media in Mizoram, 2013).
- g) The *Vanglaini*, a Mizo daily is the highest circulated newspaper in the State. The *Vanglaini* stated that it has more than 40,000 readers in the State.
- h) Finally, it can be said that though the print media of Mizoram has a long

tradition of more than hundred years, it has not grown up as an important industry in the State. For example, the highest circulated daily has a total circulation of only 40 thousand.

### Major Publications

The principal dailies in Aizawl are :- *Vanglaini*, *Romei*, *Mizo Arsi*, *Dingdi*, *Newslink*, *Thupuan*, *Rahbi*, *Mizo Aw*, *Aizawl Post*, *Hnehtu*, *Highlander*. Of these, *Highlander* and *Newslink* are published in English.

***The Aizawl Post:*** *'The Aizawl Post'* is a Mizo language daily in Mizoram. It is circulated also in Guwahati, Shillong, Churachandpur, Imphal and the Jampui Hills of Tripura. It is also read by the Mizo community outside the State. It was first published in 2002. C. Lalrambuatsaiha was the founder of the daily. *The Aizawl Post* consists of 8 pages and has national and international sections. C. Lalrambuatsaiha is the Editor and owner while P.B Lalrammawia is the Executive Editor, Biakchungnunga is the News Editor. Lalhruaitluanga Chawngte is the Chief Staff Editor (Editorial. (2012, March 19). This publication house has also a few other important print publications such as *'Evening Post'*, which is a Mizo daily, *'Sunday Post'* a Mizo weekly and *'Mizoram Today'* a weekly. *The Newslink* is also now published by this group.

***Tawrh Bawm:*** *Tawrh Bawm* is a Mizo daily newspaper. This newspaper contains four pages with only one edition. This

newspaper was first published on November 2, 1968. Late L. Rinawma was the founder of this newspaper. The special news preferences of this newspapers are local, national, international, sport and entertainment. The editorial of this newspaper covers various topics. This newspaper has some special sections. Zobawm, auto section, science and technology are special sections of this newspaper. L. Rinawma, Lalsangluaii Sailo and H. Zosanliana were the previous editors of this newspaper. At present Lalsangluaii Sailo is the owner and chief editor of *Tawrh Bawm*.

***Vanglaini:*** *Vanglaini* is a Mizo daily. This newspaper contains eight pages. This newspaper was first published in 1978. It has only one edition. The newspaper also has an internet edition. *Vanglaini* has various pages like local, national, international, sports and advertisements. K. Sapdanga is the owner of this newspaper. He is also the news editor of the newspaper. This newspaper gets advertisement from government and local/private sectors.

***Highlander:*** *Highlander* is an English daily newspaper published from Mizoram. It was published from September 1972. The newspaper contains twelve pages. Lalkhawliana is the owner and founder of the newspaper. It does not have any internet edition. Social and political news are widely covered. The sport has a special section in the newspaper. Lalkhawliana is the editor of the newspaper whereas

Zomuanpuia the executive editor and news editor of the newspaper. There are twelve employees in the newspaper. The newspaper collects news and photos from various news and photo agencies. Social and political reforms are the main editorial focus of the newspaper.

**National Observer:** *National Observer* is a daily Mizo newspaper consisting of 2 pages. It has an Aizawl edition. It consists of special supplements. Sangsuakthanga is the founder as well as the owner and editor of the daily. Zohmangaihi is the news editor. It collects some news also from the internet. It covers areas like education, environment and entertainment among others.

**Mizo Aw:** *Mizo Aw* is a Mizo daily consisting of 4 pages. It has an edition in Aizawl. The newspaper gives preference to political and national news with special sections like Tualchung. D. R Zirliana is the owner as well as the chief editor of the daily. Ricky Vanlalnghaka and Brian Lalnunhlma are the news editors. It collects news from newsonair.com and follows a political policy.

**Luangliam:** *Luangliam* is a Mizo monthly magazine. It contains 48 pages. This magazine covers basically students' news. Vanlahmangaiha (Ma-puia) is the editor of the magazine and C.Laltlanpuii (Matlani) is the Joint Editor. Lalmuanpuii (Ma Muani) is the Asst. editor, Haulianthanga is the legal adviser and Laldintluanga (Valte-a) is the circulation manager of the magazine.

**Morning Post:** *Morning post* is a Mizo daily newspaper. It was published from May 2, 1991. This newspaper contains two pages and has only one edition. L.T. Sanga is the founder, owner and editor of the newspaper. Current, political, social and economic issues are the preference of the newspaper with a focus on social reforms. Health tip is the special section of the newspaper. Lalremsiama is the news editor of the newspaper. The newspaper collects news from various government websites and news agencies.

**Zalen:** *Zalen* is a Mizo weekly newspaper. It contains six pages and has only one edition. Political, cultural, sports and religious stories are covered by the newspaper. National, Entertainment, leisure, sports, article and religion are its special sections. Vanlalrema Vantawl is the founder and owner and T. Lalbikdika is the news editor of this newspaper. It collects news and photographs from various news and photo agencies.

**Zawlbuk:** *Zawlbuk* is a Mizo daily newspaper. It contains two pages. This newspaper was published from February 1, 2011 and Lalbiakdika is the founder of the newspaper. The prefer issue based news. Sports, national and international news are the special sections of the newspaper. The founder is the present owner and editor of the newspaper. They collect news from All India Radio, DIPR and other sources. The editorial policy of the newspaper is to teach the people to be good citizens.

**Thlirtu Daily:** Thlirtu Daily is a Mizo daily of 2 pages. T.C Kapmawia is the founder and former editor of the daily. Lalrinmawia Sailo is the owner and the editor. Some of the regular page titles are national, international, city etc. The newspaper collects news from PTI and DIPR. It gets advertisement from DIPR and the private sector. It follows the editorial policy based on the issues.

**Newslink:** *Newslink* is an English daily of 4 pages published from Aizawl. It was first published on July 1, 1998. K. Zabiaka founded the daily. It prefers mostly political news. Zodinsanga and K. Lawmsanga were the previous editors. K. Zabiaka is the owner as well as the present editor. Zodinsanga and K. Lawmsanga are the news editors.

**Zozam Times:** *Zozam Times* is a Mizo daily published from Aizawl. C. Lalduhawma is the editor while H. Laldinmawia is the editor-in-chief. Malsawmdawng Zela Khiangte is the news editor and Robert Zoliana is the associate editor.

**Mizo Arsi:** Mizo Arsi is a Mizo daily founded in 1946. Chhuanvawra is the editor.

**Harhna:** *Harhna* is a mizo newspaper consisting of 4 pages. C. Vulluaia is the Editor while David Chawnga is the News Editor. Herman is the Joint Editor.

**Zoteen's:** *Zoteen's* is a Mizo thalaite magazine. It consists of 40 pages. The

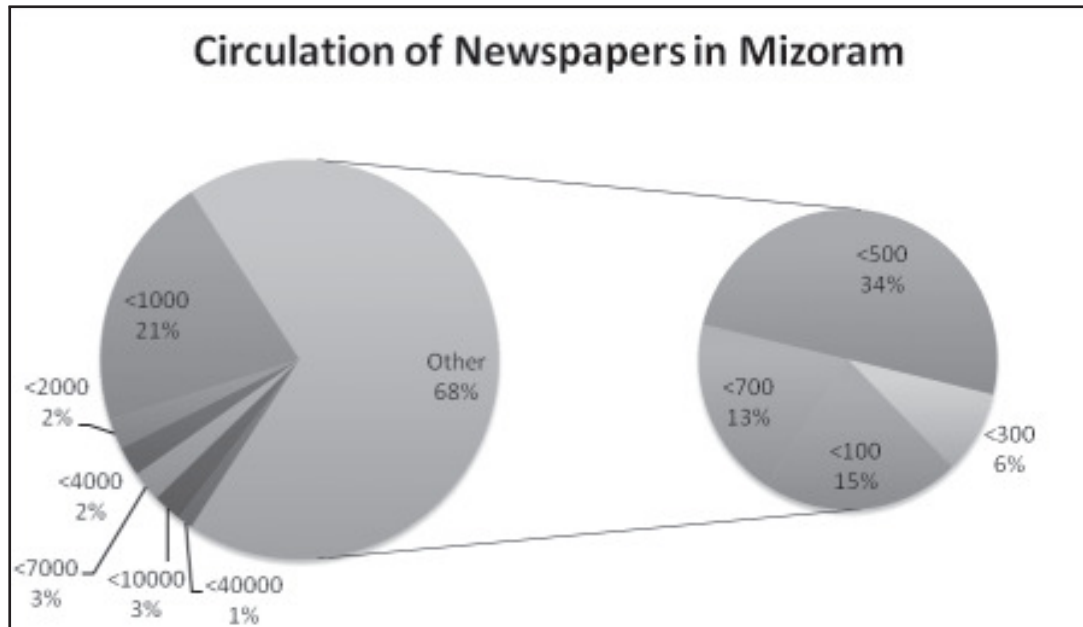
magazine gives preference to youth and student issues. Vanlalmangaiha (Mapuia) is the owner as well as the editor. C. Laldinthara is the executive editor.

**DIKTAWN:** *Diktawn* is a monthly Mizo magazine. It consists of 50 pages. Lalmachhuana Zofa is the founder of the magazine and also its owner and chief editor. Laldinthara is the executive editor and Solomon L. Sailo and K. Lalnunsiana are the news editors.

**Tunlai Chanchin:** Directorate of Information and Public Relations (DIPR), Mizoram has its own publication, which is issued periodically.

### Circulation

Literacy is the significant condition for newspaper circulation. The literacy of Mizoram is more than 90 percent. But the circulation scenario of the newspapers is not in a good position. The Directorate of Information and Public Relations of Mizoram government has provided a list of newspapers with circulation to the researcher. As per the list, *Vanglaini* is the highest circulated daily with 40,000 copies of circulation. There are only two newspapers with more than 10,000 circulations namely *Aizawl Post* (13,000 copies) and *Zalen* (10,500 copies). *Virthli* (8500 copies) and *Zozam Times* (7000 copies) have more than 5000 copies. *Romei* and *Evening Post* have 4,000 copies each and *Harhna* and *Zoram Voice* have more than 3,000 copies of circulation.



Newspapers in the range of 2,000 copies and more are *Mizo Aw*, *Lunglei Tribune*, *Pasaltha* and *Rihlipui*. *Chhawrpial*, *Dingdi*, *Tawrhawm*, *Aizawl Observer*, *Newslink*, *Highlander*, *Morning Post*, *Mizo Arsi*, *Hnehti*, *Zawlbuk*, *Ralvengtu*, *Vulmawi*, *Ramnuam*, *Serchhip Times*, *Lairam*, *Moonlight* and *Saiha Post* have their circulation in the range of 1,000 to 2,000 copies. There are about 40 newspapers with less than 1,000 copies of circulation and more than 500 copies. Again it is interesting that a few newspapers have their circulation less than 500 copies.

From the circulation viewpoint, it can be said that the newspaper industry in Mizoram is based on the community participation. For 11 lakh population, the newspaper circulation is about one lakh eighty thousand. Considering the population of the state, the total circulation is satisfactory. It is considered that the

readership of a single copy of the newspaper is more than five persons. It is significant that as per the circulation data, the number of newspapers is quite high. There are only 4 percent of newspapers that have circulation more than 10,000. Five percent have more than 4,000 and 2 percent have more than 2,000 copies of circulation. There is 21 percent newspapers have circulation of only 1,000 copies. Finally we may say that there is only 32 percent newspapers with a daily circulation of more than one thousand copies. Rest 68 percent have less than one thousand copies of circulation, which includes 34 percent with 500 or little more copies of circulation followed by 15 percent newspaper with only 100 copies of circulation. About 13 percent newspapers' circulation are 700 copies or little more and six percent have 300 copies of circulation. Another important fact for those apart from the



Aizawl district, the circulation of the newspapers published from the other districts is not satisfactory.

### Advertising Revenue

It is observed that the newspapers of the state are economically dependent on the advertising revenue. As the circulation of the newspapers is not sufficient, so the owners of the newspapers cannot run the paper depending on the revenue from the circulation. In the survey, it was seen that almost all the newspapers get advertisements from the Directorate of Information and Public Relations, Government of Mizoram. A few newspapers also get the advertisements from the DAVP, Government of India. But the rates of the advertisements are nominal. For example, as on March 2011; the advertisement tariff of the ZAWLBUK is 80 rupees per column for a classified advertisement from DIPR and Rs 2500 for one of a full page. *Tawrh Bawn* gets an advertisement with a tariff of the newspaper is 1cm. 3col= Rs.240 (government approved rate). *Thlirtu Daily* gets Rs. 80 per column.

Some newspapers expect a good advertising rate from the advertisers. The

tariff of advertisement of the Highlander is 200 per col. cm. The advertisement tariff of *Vanlainsi* for front page-colour is Rs 600 per col. cm, black and white is Rs 550 per col.cm, for back page colour advertisement it is Rs. 500 per col.cm and black and white is Rs.450 col.cm. And for inside page (only black and white) is Rs.250 per col.cm. Mizoram Post's advertisement tariff is per square cm Rs. 120 and 100 and 50 percent additional for the front page and back page respectively. *Newslink* is important English daily of the state with a circulation of 23,000 copies covering eight districts of Mizoram. The advertising tariff is Rs. 250 per column cm for the front page in black and white and Rs. 350 for colour insertion. Full page display is rupees one lakh.

Directorate of Advertising and Visual Publicity of the Union Ministry of Information and Broadcasting regularly publishes the advertisements in a few newspapers of Mizoram. As per the accounts of the financial year 2011-12, DAVP has published advertisements in the *Highlander*, *Mizoram Post*, *Harhna*, *the Aizawl Post* and *Vanlainsi*. The allotments of the advertisements in these five daily newspapers are:

Name of the Newspaper	Language	Total Spaces covered for advertisements of DAVP (Col. Cm)	Total amount
Highlander	English	69203	1095708
Mizoram Post	English	216023	4677314
Harhna	Mizo	64099	1010472
Aizawl Post	Mizo	75358	1695738
Vanlainsi	Mizo	121806.75	2252262

In comparison with the other states, the majority of the newspapers of this state are not included in the panel for the DAVP advertisements. For example, 279 newspapers of Maharashtra are DAVP empanelled. A total twelve newspapers of Meghalaya, eleven of Manipur and 74 of Assam are empanelled under DAVP whereas five each of Nagaland, Arunachal Pradesh and Mizoram are included for union advertisements (DAVP Annual Report 2011-2012, 2013).

A good number of newspapers are empanelled under the Directorate of Information and Public Relations of the state government. In the field survey, *Thlirtu Daily*, *Tawrh Bawm Daily*, *Newslink*, *Zawlbuk*, *Vanglaini*, *Zalen*, *Mizoram Post*, *Mizo Aw*, *National Observer* and *Highlander* have informed that they publish advertisements of the state government in a regular basis issued by the DIPR, Government of Mizoram. The tariff of state government

advertisements as per the DIPR rates in local newspapers is Rs 30 per cm/column for classified advertisement and Rs 1500 per full page for display advertisement. Apart from the state and union government advertisements, the newspapers are also getting a good number of private advertisements considering the circulation of the newspaper.

### **Conclusion**

The present status of the press in Mizoram is far from satisfactory. The circulation is limited so also the advertising revenue. In the absence of any industrial or corporate support, newspapers in Mizoram mostly have to depend upon the government support. It may rob them of their precious freedom of expression. Of course, the Mizo society is close-knit and community-oriented. As such, it needs public and government support, without strings attached.

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