

## Political Movements of the Hmars in Mizoram: A Historical Study

Vanlalliena Pulamte\*

### Abstract

*This article studies political movement of the Hmar people and situation leading to the formation of Hmar National Union, Hmar Peoples' Convention and Hmar Peoples' Convention (Democratic). An analytical study of political problems of the Hmars in North Mizoram and various issues concerning Hmars' political empowerment is undertaken.*

**Keywords:** Hmar, Mizo, Movement, People, Government

### Genesis of Hmar Movement

The Hmar are scattered over Manipur, Mizoram, Cachar and North Cachar Hill districts of Assam. They are the original inhabitants of northern portion of Mizoram and the present south-western parts of Manipur. The Hmars themselves claim that historically and culturally they were different from other tribes and they have a distinct language. Such claim is more pronounced among the Hmars who live in the border areas or outside Mizoram (Lalsiamhnuna, 2011). The Hmars are one of the Mizo groups and they are attracted by the Mizo Union and its movement in the former Lushai Hills. The Mizo Union was formed on 9<sup>th</sup> April, 1946 and thus became the lone political party ever formed in the Lushai Hills (now Mizoram) (Jangkhongam Doungel, 2010). In 1935, prior to the formation of Mizo

Union, in Lushai Hills, the Hmars of Manipur formed a voluntary association known as 'The Hmar Association' by the educated Hmars and elite groups to preserve their customs, tradition, language, culture, practice and identity. When the Mizo Union party was formed in the Lushai Hills, the Hmars Association expected a lot of things from it and worked in collaboration with it (Pudaite Rosiem, 2002).

The main objective of the Mizo Union party was to preserve the socio-cultural ethos of the Mizo people and maintain the Mizo identity. The Mizo Union party extended its influence in Manipur and Cachar in Assam by opening branches especially among the Hmar tribes. The Hmar area of Manipur formed a separate division of the Mizo Union and had elected Dr.Thanglung as its first

\* Dr. Vanlalliena Pulamte is Assistant Professor, Department of Political Science, GC College, Silchar: Assam.

Divisional President (Pudaite Rosiem, 2002). Through this newly formed Mizo Union, people were mobilized for the movement as the sole objective of the movement was to merge the Hmars inhabited areas of south west Manipur (present Tipaimukh Assembly Constituency) with the contiguous hill areas of Assam to form a Mizo Hill District. The Mizo Union movement gained a momentum when India got independence. The Hmar people were aware that as long as they remain divided, they would remain weak and would be exploited (Pudaite Rosiem, 2002).

Thus, the Hmar people joined a newly formed Mizo Union and started the boycott movement against the Manipur Government. They boycotted the first general election in 1948. But this agitation was of non-violent movement and there was no untoward incident. The village chiefs and their village authority members did not join the agitation because their chiefship and privileges would be forfeited. The chiefs represent the Maharaja of Manipur in the administration of the village and therefore, it was their duty to maintain the integrity of Manipur. The chiefs and their authority members acted as agents to the State Government. They acted as watchful dogs on the side of the government. The chiefs used to give a very detailed report of various activities of the Mizo Union (Resistance, 1979). Thus, the State Government tried to put down the agitation by sending armed forces to the hill areas, stationing them at

Thanlon sub-divisional headquarters. The boycott movement gained its ground in the villages. The people from all walks of lives joined the Mizo Union enthusiastically for the demand of the Mizo Autonomous District so as to include all the Hmar inhabited areas of Tipaimukh constituency and some parts of Cachar, Assam (Pudaite Rosiem, 2002).

In the early part of 1949, sensing the danger of movement, the then Chief Minister of Manipur, Maharaja Kumar Priyo Brata Singh accompanied by Major R.Kathing, Minister for Hills Affairs and the Commandant of the 4<sup>th</sup> Assam Rifles paid an official visit to Tipaimukh area. In his public address to the Hmar people at Parbung, M.K.Priyo Brata Singh reiterated that while the Hmars people had all his sympathy, he was not prepared to take up any measures which affect the territorial integrity of Manipur. Priyo Brata did his best to save Manipur from breaking up by suggesting the formation of Hmars Regional Council. This offer had eventually divided the Hmars into two conflicting groups. One section wanted to accept the plan, as the first for demanding and eventually forcing further concession. Whereas the second section, perhaps the more dominant group rejected the plan on the ground that it would affect their relations with other Mizos (Pudaite Rosiem, 2002).

The visit of Chief Minister to the Hmar area had further widened the gap between the Unionists and the loyalists which had existed before. The loyalists

particularly the chiefs and the authority members welcomed the Chief Minister and got moral encouragement from him. On the other hand, the Unionists received a great setback and decided to reject the Chief Minister's offer of regional council in his public meeting (Lala Hmar, 2005). In course of time, the village chiefs and their authority members were strongly against the movement. For them, to support the movement would mean the loss of their chieftainship rights and privilege. And therefore, it was impossible for them to support the movement. Under the proposed Mizo Autonomous District Council, there would be no room for the hereditary chief on the ground of democratic process and thus the chiefs had full allegiance to the Maharaja of Manipur (Pudaite Rosiem, 2002). Under such prevailing situation, repressive measures were employed by the State Government to suppress the movement. The chiefs joined hands with the government and tried to save their positions. In this way, the chiefs and their supporters were considered as a stumbling block to the Unionists movement. This kind of confrontation between the two sections of the people had soon caused for the arrest of unionists leaders and their imprisonment.

While this movement was going on in Manipur, the Mizo leaders in Lushai hills accepted the Autonomous Hill district plan of the government of India. This was an exclusion of the Hmars inhabited areas outside the Lushai hills and therefore, the

Lushai hills alone were given the Autonomous Hill district (Lala Hmar, 2005). It was through this political demand that the Hmars joined hands with the Mizo so that the Hmar inhabited areas contiguous to the Lushai hills district would be amalgamated. Thus, the boycott movement launched by the Hmar tribes was defeated and the Hmar felt let down from the hands of their kindred brethren. For this very reason, their political wishes remained unsolved till date. The Hmars joined the Mizo Union movement with great enthusiasm because of the following factors:

1. Through the Mizo Union Movement, people were mobilized for the movement for having the sole objective of merging the Hmar inhabited areas of south west Manipur with the contiguous hill areas of Assam to form a Mizo hill district.

2. The people became conscious that as long as they remain divided, they would remain weak and would continue to be exploited.

3. Thus the Hmar people's boycott movement started from 1946-1949 under the name of the newly formed political party 'Mizo Union' in Manipur against the state government. They (the Hmars) first of all boycotted the first general election held in 1948.

### **Separation of the Hmars from the Mizo**

The unsuccessful attempt for the inclusion of Hmars inhabited areas into

the Mizo Hill Autonomous District had negative impact upon the Hmar people. They were deceived by their kindred brethren in Mizoram. As a result, the Hmar politics took a different turn. They now feel ashamed to be called themselves as Mizo tribes and even began to dislike the Lushai language which they had used as a common language. Since then the Hmar began to think in term of Hmar ethnic interest only. Even before the formation of Mizo Union, the first political party among the Hmars was the Hmar Mongoloid Federation Party, formed in 1934, under the leadership of Laltudaia Hmar (Pudaite Rosiem, 2002). The main objective of the party was to maintain their unity, custom and culture. However, majority of the Hmar population embraced the Mizo Union party to fight for their political demand.

Immediately after the failure of the Hmar boycott movement in Manipur, Rochunga Pudaite, a student of Allahabad University formed the Hmar National Congress in 1954, to maintain identity and unity of the Hmar people. However, there were still many Hmars who identified themselves with the Mizo Union party which was still in existence. The existence of the two political parties among the Hmar people was not liked by the educated and elite group of the Hmars and accordingly the Hmar Assembly was convened at Senvon village in 1954, in which the two parties came together and formed the Hmar National Union (HNU) in 1959 (Pudaite Rosiem, 2002). The first

President of the new political party was Selkai Hrangchal and Vanlabawi was the first General Secretary. The Hmar National Union (HNU) submitted memorandum to the Prime Minister by demanding the Hmar Autonomous Hill District comprising of the Hmars inhabited areas of Assam, Manipur and Mizo Hills ('Hmar National Union's Memorandum to the Prime Minister of India, 1968). As mentioned earlier, the Hmar people were scattered in Cachar, North Cachar of Assam, Mizoram and Manipur under different administrative set up. The integration of all the Hmar inhabited areas has been the greatest desire and the political goal of the Hmars since the time of the British rule in India. The division of the Hmar inhabited areas under different administrative units has been a drawback for the progress and development of Hmars. When the Hmars embraced the Mizo Union party, they hoped that they might do better with their kindred brother for the maintenance of their identity and culture. Otherwise the Hmars could perhaps have their regional council much earlier than the Mizos, had they not rejected the offer made by P.B.Singh when he addressed an open air meeting at Parbung, Manipur, during his tour to the Hmar areas.

The non-inclusion of the Hmar areas in the proposed Lushai Hills Autonomous District had a far reaching effect so far as the Hmars political life was concerned. The Hmars withdrew themselves from their association with the Mizo Union

party and this was added by establishing a community based political party known as the Hmar National Union (HNU) in order to separate and maintain their own identity. The main objective of the Hmar National Union was to carve out the Hmar Autonomous Hill District comprising of all the Hmars areas of Mizoram, Manipur, Cachar, Assam and Tripura. In order to do this, the Hmars enlisted themselves in the Scheduled Tribes list in 1956 (Gazette of India, 1956). By doing so they called themselves as a separate tribe both in theory and action. They did not like to be identified as Mizo and they even disregarded the Lushai language which had been used as a common lingua-franca as a result of their frustration. The Bible was translated into the Hmar language and many devotional hymns and songs were composed in their mother tongue. Not only this, the Hmar vernacular schools were opened in different places. Soon the Hmar language which once almost died began to be revived. The Hmar students Association had taken up this project and within a very short period, the Hmar dialect became popular at least in their areas. Prior to this, the Hmars were restricted from using their language in the worship service and even discouraged to compose song in their mother tongue. The Lushai language was both official and non-official language and there could not be any other substitution to it. With the creation of Lushai Hills Autonomous District Council, the non-Lushai speaking people were regarded as non-Mizo which was also unknowingly interpreted by some

that Mizo means Lushai. Thus, the Hmars asserted themselves as a separate nationality and preferred to be called separately out of frustration. Had the Mizo territorial integrity which was once demanded been achieved, there would not be any question of separate Hmar tribe and Hmar language just as the Ralte clans have been completely assimilated in the Mizo fold. Thus, the emergence of Hmar People Convention, demanding a separate Hmar Autonomous Hill District in Mizoram should also be looked from this perspective (Dr. Pudaite Rosiem).

### **Hmar Movements in Mizoram**

The first Hmar political organization, the Hmar National Congress (HNC) was formed under the leadership of Rochunga Pudaite on July 3, 1954 at Parbung, Churachandpur Manipur and this was the first ever held Hmar Inkhawmpui (Conference). The HNC demanded for creation of the Hmar Hill District by curving out from the integrated parts of Lushai Hills, Assam and Manipur where the Hmar tribe was in a majority and they submitted a memorandum to the States Reorganization Commission (Memorandum to the Chairman of States Re-Organization Commission, 1954). The Hmar National Congress could not pursue the aspirations of people and could not go ahead as the founder president Rochunga Pudaite left for Glasgow for further studies. The Hmar National Union was formed in the second Hmar Inkhawmpui (second conference) at Senvon on December 5-6, 1958, which superseded

the Hmar National Congress. The demand for Hmar Autonomous District Council was intensified under the banner of the newly formed Hmar National Union (HNU). By the last part of the Mizo Union Movement, the dissatisfaction of Hmars started because their (Hmar) inhabited areas were excluded from the proposed Mizo District as demanded by the Mizo Union.

At the beginning part of the movement, the Mizo Union leaders encouraged the Hmar people to join hands with their kindred Mizo (Lushai) and their slogan was to merge and include all the Hmar inhabited areas of Tipaimukh Assembly Constituency of Churachandpur District, Manipur and some parts of Cachar, Assam. Out of frustration with the Mizo Union movement, they (Hmars) formed a new political party and launched a new movement for their own ethnic consideration. Since the Mizo Union had accepted Autonomous District covering only the Lushai Hills, the idea and vision of forming the Mizo Government which would include the inhabited areas of Hmars became unrealistic. Since then, the Hmars in Manipur found it loathsome to identify themselves as Mizo because they began to despise the Lusei dialect. This bred separate ethnicism among the Hmars and they began to fight for the autonomous district for themselves (Dr. Chonzik B. Paul, 2010). The Hmars in Mizoram had supported the HNU demand for Hmar Hills District as evident from the sprouting of branches and units of HNU in some

Hmar villages like Sakawrdai, Vaitin, Khawpuor, Palsang, Tinghmun and Mauchar in early 1960s. The Hmars in Mizoram had launched three movements. The first was in 1964-66 called the Hmar Regional Movement demanding creation of Autonomous Regional Council in North Mizoram where the Hmars were in majority. The second movement was launched during 1986-1994 by the Hmar People's Convention (HPC) demanding for Autonomous District Council in North Mizoram where they claimed the Hmar tribe was in majority (First Memorandum of HPC, 1987). The third movement was launched during 1995-2018 by the Hmar People's Convention (Democratic) HPC (D).

Demanding for the creation of Hmar Autonomous Regional Council in Mizoram, in line with those granted to the Pawi (Lai), Lakher (Mara) and the Chakma, the Hmar Regional Movement was launched in 1964 at Palsang village in North Mizoram (Dr. Chonzik B. Paul, 2010). This movement was mainly instigated by the feeling of negligence which was carried out by the Mizoram Government on developmental issues especially in the Hmar inhabited area. During those times, Tuisuol region where the majority of Hmars were inhabitants was called the 'dark north' (Hmar Thimpui) as a derogatory note, for the region was backward in the field of education, medical establishment, communication and economic, because the Government neglected the region. That



was why they thought the creation of autonomous regional administrative setup exclusively for the region necessary (Dr. Chonzik B. Paul. 2010).

On 15<sup>th</sup> May 1966, the Hmar Regional Movement decided to submit a memorandum to the Governor. The President of Hmar Regional Movement went to Aizawl to seek advice from political leaders and educated and senior Hmars who had deeper understanding of the present political situation and also Hmar socio-cultural, economic and political problems to be incorporated in the proposed memorandum. He also met Laldenga, President of Mizo National Front (MNF), who strongly advised him to stop the movement while Mizoram was playing 'international politics' (meaning MNF's fight for independence). The movement faded in vigour due to many difficulties including MNF opposition, and fettered away and the memorandum they submitted remained unpursued (Dr. Chonzik B. Paul. 2010). The movement appeared to be provoked by real or perceived deprivation of their rights from the State Government, especially in comparing their socio-political and economic status with other regions, namely, the Pawi (Lai), Lakher (Mara) and Chakma tribes who were enjoying the Autonomous Regional Council. It is not clear if the term 'Hmar' in the name of the movement was used to refer to the ethnic Hmar tribesmen. It looks more like that it referred to the geographical 'north' ('hmar' in Mizo and Hmar) such as was

used to identify 'Hmar Thimpui' meaning 'dark north'. It might also had been used conveniently to refer to both geographical north as well as the ethnic group since the area has majority Hmar population. The achievement of their goal could have served both their region and the ethnic Hmar people.

### **Hmar People's Convention (HPC)**

Exclusion of the Hmar area of Churachandpur District of Manipur from the Mizo District had repercussion in Mizoram. In 1954, some prominent citizens of Aizawl town like Lalbuai Khawlhring (Ex. M.P.), H.Raltawna I.A.S. (Retired) and others belonging to Hmar ethnic group at Aizawl formed a political party called 'Hmar Fenngo Federation' for the Hmar people living in erstwhile Lushai Hills District (Hmingchungnunga, 1999). This was, however, not welcomed by some politicians from the mainstream Mizo ethnic group as a whole. They requested the leaders of newly formed 'Federation' to put an end to the party and its activities. In conforming to their request, the Hmar leaders sacrificed their party for the cause of Mizo integrity and stopped instantly their political activities. However, the feeling of political insecurity rose again in 1950. Under the leadership of Manliana Pudaite, Hmar National Union, Mizoram Area was organized. But before starting important activities, the party ceased to exist after two or three years of its formation (Lalsiamhnuna, 2011). The party ceased to exist mainly because of Hmars being a part of Mizo

group, they were attracted by the Mizo Union and its movement, and they expected a lot of things from the Mizo Union and joined. The demand for Hmar District to be carved out of portions from Manipur, Assam, Mizoram and Tripura got momentum during 1965 and 1966. The Hmar National Union (HNU) leaders of Manipur advised their brothers in North Mizoram to set up party units. Accordingly, many units of HNU were established in villages of North Mizoram. But due to the uprising movement of the MNF, those units had to stop functioning. It is reported that one of the activists of HNU, H. Thanga Keivawm of Palsang village was killed by the Mizo National Army (MNA) Volunteers as HNU Party and its activists were against their movement (Hmingchungnunga, 1999). Rohringa Pulamte and his friend hailing from Vaitin village were caught and kept under arrest for about 15 days. They were, then released on assurance of not to conduct any activity in the name of Hmar National Union afterwards.

On hearing the news of coercion and intimidation method applied by the MNF on their brothers in Mizoram, the Hmars living outside Mizoram, especially those who were living in Manipur, were very much furious and tried to oppose the MNF movement openly. But, before things had gone wrong in 1969 hundreds of MNA personnel, under the leadership of L. Malsawma Colney, Senator, Northern Area (or Run Area), by chance, visited Senvawn village, the biggest village of

Hmar concentration in the South-West of Manipur. He delivered lecture in a public meeting for three hours. In his speech, among many other things, he invited the Hmar people not to organize any political party other than MNF (Hmingchungnunga, 1999). "Since MNF is the sole political party in which the rights and solidarity of all the Mizos and territorial integration of all the Mizo inhabited areas into one administrative unit could be achieved,-there would be no question of establishment of other political parties" he added. His speech was so touching that their grievances against the MNF activists were substantially addressed and many Hmar youths were enrolled as MNF volunteers. One of them was Capt. Laizova Hnamte (L), Saikawt Village, Churachandpur, Manipur (Lalsiamhnuna, 2011).

Things were going normal for more than a decade (1966-1978). However, by strictly observing the political situation of Mizoram and other Mizo inhabited areas under the MNF movement during the whole course of their activities, the Hmars in North Mizoram had strong impression that their long cherished hope- 'Integration of all the Mizo ethnic groups under one Government possessing the highest degree of freedom' could never be achieved (Hmingchungnunga, 1999). As such, sympathizers of Hmar politics, under the initiative of L.Sungte, hailing from Vaitin Village, North Mizoram, revived Hmar politics and formed the Hmar National Union Mizoram in 1979. This was also



banned by the Mizo National Army Maj. Chalrikhuma Hmar and party at gun point requested them to wait patiently for the home-coming of the MNF with their demand. Thus ended again the feeble Hmar politics to be renewed only after the signing of the Historic Mizo Peace Accord (Lalsiamhnuna, 2011). After bringing about an end to the disturbed conditions in Mizoram, caused by the MNF Insurgency Movement and when peace and harmony have been restored, the scattered Hmars in the North-east realised that their long cherished hope of unification of Mizo-inhabited areas of other states with Mizoram, to form one administrative unit, was completely turned down for the second time, the first being during the time of Mizo Union Party's regime. In the Memorandum of Settlement (between MNF & Government of India) 4.11, it is clearly stated thus; "The question of the unification of Mizo inhabited areas of other states to form one administrative unit was raised by the MNF delegation. It was pointed out to them, on behalf of the Government of India, that article 3 of the Constitution of India describes the procedure in this regard but that the Government cannot make any commitment in this respect." (Hmar National Union's Memorandum to the Prime Minister of India, 1968). Out of frustration of being neglected by their kindred tribes in Mizoram, Hmar People's Convention (HPC) Party was formed. On 19<sup>th</sup> July 1986, a few sections of Hmars, viz. J. Laldinliana, Thanglianchhunga, L. Sungte, J. Thanzuala, Suoklien and some

others held a secret meeting at Mana & Sons Building, Dawrpui (Bara Bazar), Aizawl. The meeting decided to hold Mizoram Hmar Conference at Vaitin Village, North Mizoram on 19<sup>th</sup> October 1986. The theme of the proposed Conference was "Hmar Political Future." An adhoc body of the Organizing Committee was formed (Hmingchungnunga, 1999).

The Mizo Accord was signed between the MNF and the Government of India on June 30, 1986 that brought to an end the 20 long years of Mizo National Front insurgency (Dr. Chonzik B. Paul, 2010). A few days later, on July 4, 1986, some Hmar youths gathered at Thangliensung's residence, Electric Veng, Aizawl, and decided to form Mizoram Hmar Association (MHA), to further the cause of Hmars in cultural field. A Special Convention was called by the MHA on December 18, 1986, when the Association was transformed into a political organization and was named the Hmar People's Convention (HPC). The HPC made demands of Autonomous District Council under the Sixth Schedule of the constitution of India through self-style plebiscite, a homeland for the Hmars in the thickly populated and compact Hmar occupied areas of the whole North East India to enable them to preserve their culture, customs and language. The HPC demand then was more or less the same with the demand of Hmar National Congress and Hmar National Union earlier. However, as per the decision of

meeting of the party Executive Body on May 23, 1987, their demand henceforth confined to the creation of 'Hmar Autonomous District Council' in the Hmar majority area in North Mizoram.

On 20<sup>th</sup> June, 1988, the leaders of Hmar People's Convention met Laldenga, Chief Minister of Mizoram, in connection with their Memorandum submitted earlier demanding the Hmar Autonomous District Council. The Chief Minister agreed to discuss their demand in the near future. However, unfortunately, the M.N.F. ministry collapsed on 7th September, 1989. Hope for political settlement under the MNF ministry ended in smoke. In the 1989 Election, the Congress Party rose to power. On 21st February, 1989, the new Chief Minister Lal Thanhawla was met by the leaders of HPC. The Chief Minister promised them that the matter would be discussed in the forthcoming Cabinet Meeting and after that formal talk would be conducted. It was reported that their demand was not discussed in the two successive Cabinet Meetings. This was much resented by the HPC and took it as a sign of negligence and deception to make their effort a futile (Lalsiamhnuna, 2011). The Chief Minister of Mizoram neglected the issue of HPC and he did not want to put up in the Cabinet Meeting as he knew that creation of Hmar Autonomous District Council in Mizoram might destabilize the Mizo integration in Mizoram.

To show their discontentment as well as to force the Government, a 24- Hour

Peaceful Bandh was organised on 28<sup>th</sup> March, 1989. Thousands of Hmar youths (young men and women) gathered together at Sautankawn, along the line of Aizawl-Tipaimukh Road, somewhere in between Darlawn and Sailutar, the boundary of proposed 'demand area' in North Mizoram, to block plying of vehicles there. To counter the processionists, the Mizoram Armed Police (MAP) rushed to the spot. Since, the so called Bandh was a Peaceful Bandh, the HPC volunteers expected decent treatment and leniency from the police (Hmingchungnunga, 1999). On the contrary, they were treated as if they were unlawful activists. The MAP allegedly lathi-charged and dao charged the unarmed H.P.C. Volunteers. Many of them (around 500) were arrested, more than a hundred were injured and 20 girls were seriously injured and hospitalised in Churachandpur. It is stated that since the HPC leaders had committed themselves to the policy of non-violence, they had no intention of employing any other means to achieve their political demand. However, the news of atrocities of the MAP spreaded to the inhabited areas of Hmars in different parts of the country especially in the North-East, roused the feelings of Hmars as a whole. As such, strong pressures from every nook and corner were heard. The leaders found themselves at the point of no return and reluctantly resorted to violence (Lalsiamhnuna, 2011).

Later on, they were 'forced' to go underground in 1989, following

confrontations between the HPC volunteers and the Mizoram Armed Police forces in the two-phased peaceful bands called by HPC to press their demand. The first gunshot of the series of encounters that had to follow was fired on May 16, 1989, at Moniarkhal. In the exchange of fire on that day, R. Vanlalauva, Sub-Inspector (MAP) and Lalhuoplien and Lienhming thang (HPC) died on the spot, while one police constable succumbed to his injuries in the hospital later. HPC leaders declared this day the May 16<sup>th</sup> as the Martyr's day. As per official record, a total of 46 persons were killed and 66 injured in the various encounters of the HPC/HVC and MAP. Among those killed were 7 policemen, 22 HPC/HVC militants, and 17 civilians. This was the official record on 31.7.92. The actual figure could be much more. Since negotiations were continued from 31.7.90, and the cease-fire declared and continued almost without any break till the final signing of the Accord on 27th July, 1994, it is assumed that there were no more killings after this date (Dr. Chonzik B. Paul, 2010). The signing of the Accord between the HPC and the Government of Mizoram on that day brought to an end the eight long years movement. The Accord provided for the setting up of Sinlung Hills Development Council in the area 'to be specified within the HPC Demand Area of Mizoram (Memorandum Of Settlement, 1994).

### **Recent Trends**

The Hmar People Convention's struggle for autonomy has ended after nine

rounds of negotiation with the Government of Mizoram. After the agreement, over 300 militants surrendered along with their arms. But there were some volunteers who were not happy with the agreement. These volunteers formed another group called the Hmar People Convention Democratic (HPC (D) in 1995. This organization started demand for creation of Autonomous District in the north and north-eastern region of Mizoram. They demanded for a state consisting of the Hmar inhabited areas of Mizoram, Manipur and Assam. The demand of the outfit is to involve the Union Government so that the provision of 1994 peace agreement could be implemented effectively. The HPC (D) also intended to spearhead the movement for creation of Autonomous District Council for the Hmar people in Mizoram. To put their demand in an effective manner, they killed four personnel of Indian Reserve Battalion at Saipum village who were escorting a pay duty vehicle. The killing was followed by an apology to the families of the victim that, "The victims were suffering killing only because of Mizoram Government", as stated by David L.Hmar, Information and Publicity Secretary to the Hmar People Convention (D) (Vanglaini Sep 4, 2008). It is impossible to make conjectures about the realization of such objective, though. The fact, however, is that the Hmar people want the speedy resolution of all pending basic issues.

The Mizoram Government and the H. Zosangbera faction of the Hmar People's

Convention-Democratic (HPC-D-Zosangbera) on April 2, 2018, after six rounds of talks, signed a Memorandum of Settlement (MoS) at the State Guest House in Aizawl. The MoS was signed by Chief Secretary Arvind Ray on behalf of the State Government; and HPC-D-Zosangbera 'president' H. Zosangbera. The talks began on August 10, 2016 (Bhattacharjee Giriraj). According to the MoS, a statutory body named the Sinlung Hills Council (SHC) will be formed through an Act of the State Legislature. The SHC will comprise 14 members of whom 12 would be elected and two nominated, to be headed by the Chief Executive Member (CEM). The proposed body will reportedly have more administrative autonomy to carry out developmental works in 31 villages across three Assembly Constituencies in Mizoram: Chalfil, Tuivawl and Serlui (Bhattacharjee Giriraj). A similar statutory body, the Sinlung Hills Development Council (SHDC), had been formed on May 8, 1997, after the signing of the accord between the original Hmar People's Convention (HPC) and the Government of Mizoram on July 27, 1994. However, the provisions that were listed in that accord were never fully implemented by the State Government. Lalparkunga, the Secretary of the SHDC's Implementation Demand Committee, had thus observed on February 12, 2016, 22 Years have lapsed since the signing of Mizoram-HPC accord in 1994 but no measures have been sincerely taken to implement terms of the peace accord and

Hmar people are dismayed at the Government's indifference (Bhattacharjee Giriraj).

### **Conclusion**

When Mizo Union was formed, Hmar people were mobilized for the movement as the sole objective of the movement was the merger of the Hmars inhabited areas of south west Manipur (present Tipaimukh constituency) with the contiguous hill areas of Assam to form a Mizo hill district. While the Mizo Union movement was going on in Hmars inhabited areas of Manipur, the Mizo leaders in Lushai hills had accepted the Autonomous Hill District plan of the Government of India. This was an exclusion of the Hmars inhabited areas outside the Lushai hills and the Lushai hills alone were given the Autonomous Hill District. The failure of the Mizo integration movement of 1948-1950, to integrate the Hmar inhabited areas of Manipur with Mizo hills district, had produced a sense of cohesion and unity among the Hmars. The Hmarism and the concept of a distinct ethnic developed into the minds of Hmar leaders and started fighting for their separate ethnic identity. Subsequently, they have been demanding Hmar Autonomous District Council in northern Mizoram.

The Hmar National Union demanded Hmar District to be carved out of portions from Manipur, Assam, Mizoram and Tripura in 1966. On hearing the uprising of Hmar National Union movement,

L.Malsawma Colney, Senator Nothern Area, Mizo National Front visited Senvawn village, the biggest village of Hmar concentration in South-West of Manipur. In his speech at public meeting, he invited Hmar people not to organize any political party other than Mizo National Front as MNF is the sole political party in which the rights and solidarity of all the Zo ethnic tribes and territorial integration of all the Mizo inhabited areas into one administrative unit could be achieved. Their grievances against the MNF activists were substantially addressed and some Hmar youths enrolled in the MNF volunteers. When political talks between Laldenga, the MNF supremo and the Government of India was going on, the Mizo Integration Council leadership demanded that Hmar inhabited areas of Manipur should be included in the proposed state of Mizoram. However, Laldenga never raised the issue of 'Greater Mizoram' in his negotiations with the Government of India,.

Considering the discontentment and grievances of the Hmars that resulted in insurgency movement, it is necessary to

take care of their demands. All care should be taken to check the social tension and economic crisis and to protect their culture, tradition, custom, language and literature. The concerned government should take step to implement measures to eradicate socio-economic imbalance in the state while formulating the socio-economic planning. Moreover, the Government of Mizoram could initiate and take step to implement some provisions of the Memorandum of Settlement which have not yet been implemented. The Government of Mizoram should note that the non-implementation of Memorandum of Settlement and failing to upgrade Sinlung Hill Development Council into Autonomous District Council was the main reason for the HPC (D) re-insurgence in Mizoram. In fact, the Second time Accord was signed on April 2, 2018 between the Mizoram Government and the H. Zosangbera faction of the Hmar People's Convention-Democratic (HPC-D) is expected to produce positive result for peace and tranquility.

## References

- Dena, Lal. (1979). The Hmar People boycott movement. *Resistance, Weekly journal*, 13/7/1979,p.3.
- Doungel, Jangkhongam. (2010). *Evolution of District council Autonomy in Mizoram*. Spectrum Publications: Guwahati.
- First Memorandum of HPC addressed to Shri Rajjiv Gandhi, Prime Minister of India dated January 21, 1987, with a subject, 'North Eastern Area (States) Re-organization'
- Giriraj, Bhattacharjee: Research Assistant, Institute for Conflict Management.
- Gazette of India. (1956). The Hmar are recognized as Scheduled Tribe by the Government of India. Vide Notification Order: 24774, Part-II, Section III, No.316-A, New Delhi October 29, 1956.
- Hmar, Lala. (15 December, 2005). Mizo Union movement among the Hmar speaking community. (Vanlalliena Pulamte, Interviewer).
- Hmar National Union's Memorandum to the Prime Minister of India, New Delhi, September, 1968.
- Hmingchungnunga. (1999). *Aw Kan Hmar Ram*. Hill town, Churachandpur: Hranglienkhum Sinate, Kimboi Press.
- Lalsiamhnuna. (2011). *Political Problem of Mizoram: A Study of Ethnic Politics with special reference to the Hmar People's Movement*. Saitual: Rosepari, Ebenezer Home.
- Memorandum Of Settlement Between The Government of Mizoram and The Hmar People's Convention (HPC), Aizawl 27th July, 1994, p.4
- Pudaite, Rosiem. (2002). *Indian National Struggle For Freedom and Its Impact on the Mizo Movement*.
- Paul, Chonzik B. (2010). Hmar Autonomy Movements in Mizoram. In *Hmarram*, June 19, 2010, P-5.
- The Hmar National Congress's Memorandum to the Chairman of States Re-Organization Commission, Government of India, New Delhi. August, 1954.
- Vanglaini, Aizawl, Thursday, September-4, 2008.