

CHAPTER - V

HMAR INSURGENCY IN THE POST - 1987 PERIOD

The northern parts of Mizoram and the adjoining parts of the Manipur state are the dwelling place of a big clan called the 'Hmars'. The communal feeling once reared its ugly head displaying itself as an insurgency among the Hmars. The political history of Mizoram experienced a dark period due to their insurgency which led to the awakening of the Hmars as a strong and unified community. The Hmars felt deprived of their rights as a community and demanded an autonomous district council which has not been implemented till date. Though there seems a lasting peace between the state government and the Hmar community, the dormant discontentment can explode anytime as a movement against the state government. Are there any medicines to soothe the pains of the Hmars? The government of Mizoram must give priority under the Constitutional structures and take a prompt action to heal it completely.

A PROFILE OF THE 'HMAR'

The word '*Hmar*' is a word to denote direction. *Hmar* means 'north' in Mizo language, the use of '*Hmar*' as a name of a clan is started by the Lusei people. The Luseis used to call the earlier migrants into Mizoram who moved northwards due to the pressure from the Luseis as '*Hmar*', it consists of 24 clans and 211 sub clans.¹ The 24 clans are Lawitlang (Hrangchal), Zote, Ngurte, Khawbung, Pakhuang, Darngawn, Banzang, Hmar Lusei, Sakiem, Rawite, Vaiphei, Ngente, Lungtau, Punte, Faihriem, Leiri, Khawlhiring, Vangchhia, Thiak, Hrangkhawl, Biate, Changsan, Zawngte and Darlawng.² The Hmars are a cognate clan of the great Mizo tribe and they migrated together to the present Mizoram from the

¹ Sipra Sen, *The Tribes of Mizoram Description, Ethnology and Bibliography* (New Delhi, Gian Publishing House, 1992) p.78

² H.Lalrinawma., *Hmasang Zofate Chanchin. (A History of the Mizos)* (Aizawl, Lengchhawn Press, 2000) p. 28.

eastern side. Like the Mizos, they also belong to the Tibeto Burman stock.³ The List of Hmar sub-groups suggest that Hmar and Lusei are closely knitted together and that some groups belong to both clans, they inhabited mainly the northern part of Aizawl district of Mizoram. Many of them are residing in Churachandpur District of Manipur. Some of them are living in Assam and Tripura. They are old Kuki group of tribe.⁴ When looking at the writings of the historians, the Hmars are not a separate clan from the Luseis or Mizos. H. Lalrinawma stated that “Before 1500 A.D the Lusei and the Hmars as a whole are collectively known as the Hmar or Mar.”⁵ They are known as a different clan from the Luseis because of their earlier migration. Many villages of Mizoram especially of the northern parts are coined after the name of their sub-clans the names of the villages like *Khawbung*, *Khawzawl*, *Biate*, *Ngurte*, *Chhungte*, *Zote*, *Neihdawn*, *Tualte*, *Chawnchhim*, *Vankal*, *Darngawn*, *Thiak*, *Kangbur* are the name of the Hmar clans or sub-clans.⁶

The Hmars are the earlier migrants into the present state of Mizoram, migrated prior to the mainstream of the Mizos known as Luseis. Most of the historians of the Mizos are agreed on the earlier migration of the Hmars to the west. In the book entitled “*A history of the Mizos*” The authors traced the causes of mass migration of the people, they pointed out that all the migrations of tribes took place for one or more reasons.⁷

³ Dr. Subhas Chatterjee, *Mizoram Encyclopaedia Vol. 2* (Bombay, Jaico Publishing House, 1990) p.387

⁴ Ibid

⁵ H. Lalrinawma, *Op. cit*, p. 101

⁶ B. Lalthangliana, *Zoram Encyclopaedia* (Aizawl, RTM press, 2003) p.180

⁷ C.G Verghese & R.L Thanzawna, *A History of the Mizos Vol. I* (Delhi, Vikas Publishing House, 1997) p. 82

For the authors, the reasons of migration are as under;

(a) *Due to epidemics like plague, famine or poor living conditions, and search for food and better living conditions.*

(b) *Due to tyranny and oppression of the rulers and chiefs. In this case, entire villages would not have migrated.*

(c) *Due to attack by stronger tribes or armies who are more powerful or better equipped.*

For the Hmars, the reason for their migration could be traced to the attack by stronger tribes or armies who are more powerful or better equipped. While in 1200 AD the Mizos were in the Kabaw valley and there was no difference between the Hmars or the Luseis, they were superseded by the powerful Shan clans and were forced to migrate to the Chin Hills. They migrated gradually westward and according to B. Lalthangliana the Hmar clans crossed the Tiau River to reach the hilly areas of Mizoram by the year of 1600 A.D.⁸ After a short period of the Hmars migration, the Luseis also migrated westward and their migration was a beginning for the Hmars to move in the northern parts of their habitat. The migration of the Luseis into the present Mizoram had begun in the beginning of the seventeenth century. The last batch of people who claimed themselves to be Lusei, came to Mizoram in the beginning of the seventeenth century A.D. In comparison with the other group of earlier immigrants, the Lushai groups were stronger and superior with their powerful chiefs. They were the subject of fear of the contemporaneous tribal groups such as old and new Kuki who fled to the west and north of Mizoram.⁹ The Hmars are included under the umbrella of old Kuki. It is clear that the dwelling place of the Hmars in the north and the adjacent states was the result of the Luseis late migration to the present habitat. Rev. Liangkhaia also rightly remarked that “They (The Hmars) are the early dwellers (of Mizoram) They were scared of the migrated Luseis and then moved northward receiving their

(d) *To avoid annihilation by the invading hordes of another race or country.*

(e) *If better and more fertile lands for cultivation are available at another place.*

(f) *Religious persecution or persecution of particular tribe or clans and lack of freedom of worship.*

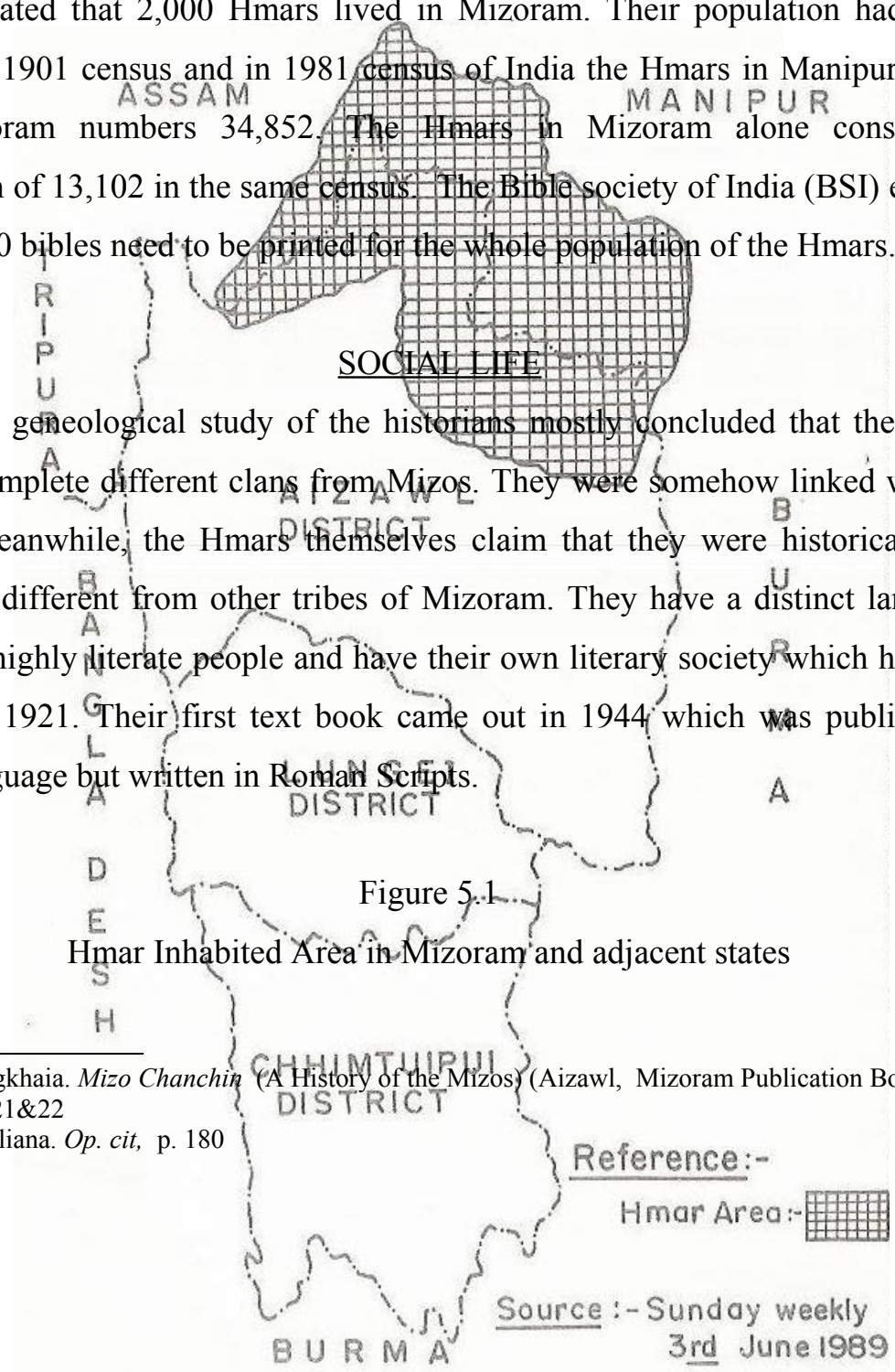
⁸ B. Lalthangliana, *Op. cit.*, p.180

⁹ The term Kuki is a Bengali language meaning wild man. In Tripura they are later known and called as Halam under which there are as many as nineteen clans. These people are known as old Kuki to the British, while the new kuki are Thado, Changsen etc. The new Kuki moved out from Burma to Manipur, Mizoram and Cachar of Assam.

name Hmar.”¹⁰ The migrated Hmars to the north went deeper and some had reached Meghalaya state. However, some of them have been settled in Cachar and North Cachar Hills of Assam and also in Tripura. But, the biggest stream of the Hmars settled in Manipur and it is the state where majority of the Hmars could be found.

In Mizoram, the Hmars constituted a sizeable population. By the year 1880, it was estimated that 2,000 Hmars lived in Mizoram. Their population had crossed 10,411 in 1901 census and in 1981 census of India the Hmars in Manipur, Tripura and Mizoram numbers 34,852. The Hmars in Mizoram alone constituted a population of 13,102 in the same census. The Bible society of India (BSI) estimated that 45,000 bibles need to be printed for the whole population of the Hmars.¹¹

The geneological study of the historians mostly concluded that the Hmars are not complete different clans from Mizos. They were somehow linked with the Mizos. Meanwhile, the Hmars themselves claim that they were historically and culturally different from other tribes of Mizoram. They have a distinct language. They are highly literate people and have their own literary society which has been started in 1921. Their first text book came out in 1944 which was published in Hmar language but written in Roman Scripts.

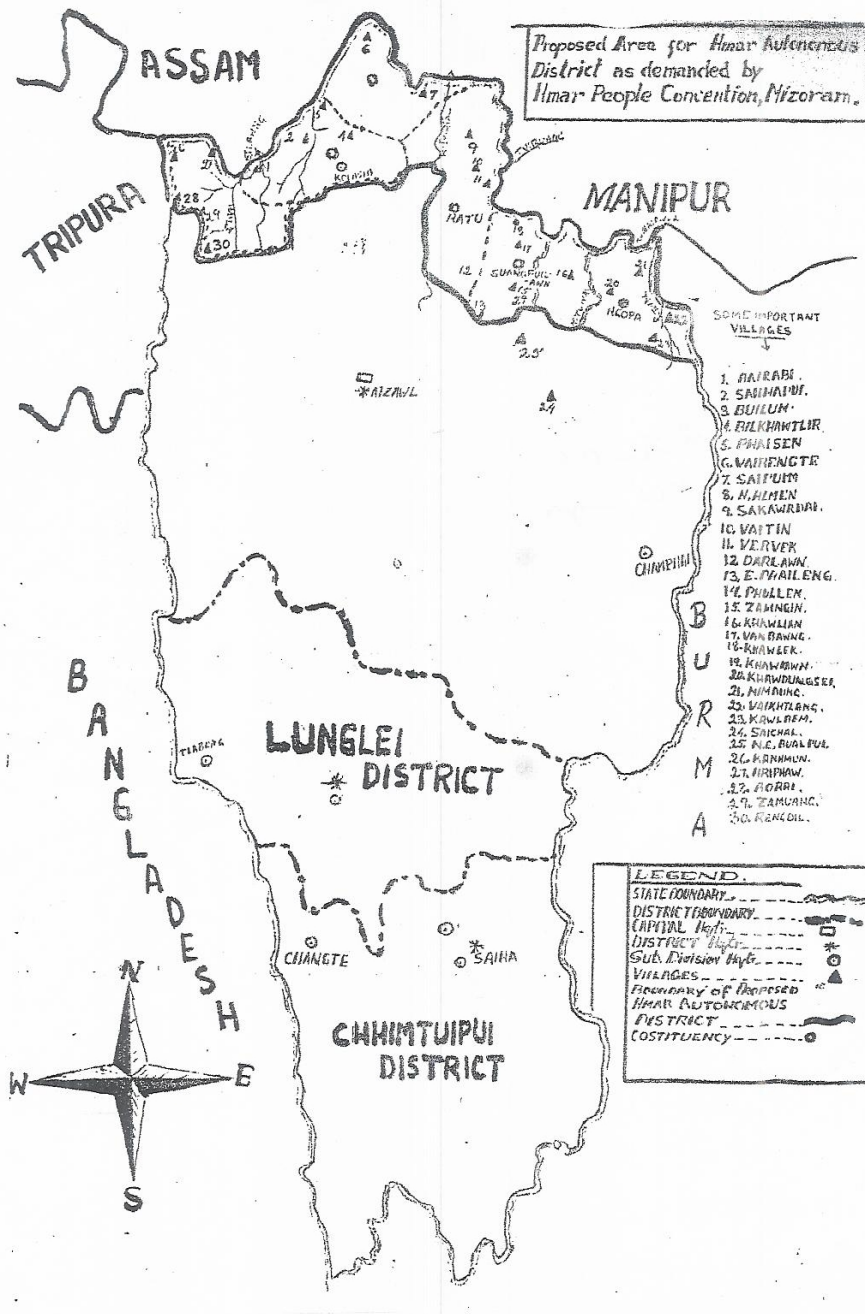


¹⁰ Rev. Liangkhaia. *Mizo Chanchin* (A History of the Mizos) (Aizawl, Mizoram Publication Board, 2002) pp. 21&22

¹¹ B. Lathangliana. *Op. cit.*, p. 180

Source: Sunday Weekly, 3rd June 1989

Figure 5.2
Proposed Area for Hmar Autonomous District as demanded by H.P.C,
Mizoram



Source: Memorandum submitted to the Prime Minister of India on the 12th of March 1990 by H.P.C general Headquarter Sakawrdai, Mizoram.

The Hmars have 24 clans and 211 sub-clans. Generally each of these clans resides in a particular area, and many of the villages are known by the names of the clans of its inhabitants. Traditionally, each clan had a dialect of its own but a common dialect for all (Hmar) has developed among them. The missionary

influence is responsible for the development of the common dialect. Before acceptance of Christianity, the clans were exogamous. Now this is not strictly adhered to. A Hmar can marry any woman except a consanguineous kin. Traditionally marriage with the mother's brother's daughter was preferred. The age of marriage is eighteen years for a girl and twenty one years for a boy. At present the Hmar are monogamous. In olden days, a chief desired to marry another chief's daughters. Generally four types of marriages are there. These are marriage by service, elopement, intrusion and arrangement or negotiation. The amount of bride price ranges from Rs. 300 to Rs 500. The amount is divided among the kin of the bride's family. The major share goes to the bride's father and smaller amounts are given to the paternal and maternal relatives. The rule of residence after marriage is patrilocal. In case the girl seeks a divorce, she has to persuade her parents to agree to refund the bride price which they have received, in case the boy seeks a divorce, and he simply gives a sum of Rs. 40 to the girl. The bride price paid by the boy is forfeited if the divorce is initiated by the boy. A widower and divorcee can remarry. Nowadays, they are expected to take remarriage license from the Church.

The Hmars are a Patrilineal society, the father is the head of the family and his authority is obeyed. He represents the family in all public meetings, directs the family affairs and provides food for every member. The mother's chief duty is to look after the home. Though the Hmar traditionally follow an extended family pattern, the number of nuclear families appears to be increasing at present

The general rule of inheritance is ultimo geniture i.e. the youngest son inherits all property as he is supposed to look after his parents even after his marriage and he does not build his separate house after his marriage. The other sons can expect at least a portion of the property. Women are not allowed to inherit any property. Succession of family office is patri-potestal i.e. the eldest son becomes the head of the family after the death of the father. The status of women is

subordinate to that of men. Nowadays, the educated and employed women have equal status as that of men in the economic spheres. The women do not inherit paternal property. Women participate in all the economic activities including collection of fuel from the jungle. They also join in all social and religious activities.

The Hmars are having different festivals which are celebrated every year. Their festivals of *Khounglawm*, *Lunglak* and *Sesun* festivals have much similarity with the *shan* people of Burma. They have *Rong* (Kingship), *Lal* (Chiefship), *Siehmong* (Village council) and *Sier* (Dormitory). Their chiefship is hereditary and occupied only by the male descendant of the chief.

The Hmar people are generally short to medium in stature, strong and muscular in appearance, face is broad and round, cheek bone is high, eyes are small, nose flat and short, skin colour varies from dark brown to light yellow.

The major economic resources of the Hmar are land, water and forest. Agriculture, hunting and gathering are the main economic pursuits. The mainstay of their livelihood is agriculture. They practice Jhum (Shifting) cultivation. The season usually begins in January. They grow paddy and vegetables on jhum land. The whole village irrespective of communities would join together in cooperative labour. They also undertake wet rice cultivation in the valley. The main crop is paddy. They also grow all kinds of vegetables and fruits including cucumber, water melon, melon, beans, yams, potatoes, red chilli and maize in the jhum land. They go to the forest for hunting animals and birds for their consumption. They also collect roots, tubers, fruits and leafy vegetables from the jungles. They also go for fishing in the nearby stream. The excess yield of grains, roots, tubers and fruits are sold in the market. They are involved in market economy. They do not follow the system of barter. The educated persons go for jobs in the urban areas. Their houses are built on stilts. The floor of a house is raised from the ground at about 1 foot to

3 feet high. Their houses are about 24 ft x 20 ft in size and made with wood, bamboo and thatches. Most of them are now Christian. The traditional dress for men is *Hrenpereng* and *Tharlaizawm* for women. But now they are of well educated and their living conditions being developed, they hold important post in the government and private enterprise in their own living place.

POLITICAL DEVELOPMENT OF THE HMARS

In spite of their being a sizeable population, the Hmars got politically awoken lately. The reason for their late political awakening could be many and varied. The Hmars as a whole were having a moderate communal feeling, the spirit of oneness with their Mizo counterparts caused the Hmars to hibernate politically for a time being. Their first communal- based concrete political party in Mizoram came into being only in 1986 known as the Hmar People's Convention (HPC). It was formed to fight for the demands of the Hmar people living in the state of Mizoram.

However the late formation of an apparent political party does not mean that the Hmars are politically unaware, it is relevant here to look at the case of the Hmars in the adjoining areas inside the Manipur state. Larger number of Hmar tribes living in the adjoining areas in Manipur and their influence over the Hmars of Mizoram can never be overlooked. Their bonds were very strong that the frustrations of the Manipur Hmars resulted in the discontentment of the Hmars living in Mizoram. History reveals the fact that it was the Manipur Hmars who encouraged to the Mizoram Hmars and motivated that all their demands are justified and desirable.

When the first political party of the Mizos i.e. Mizo Union was formed; most of the cognate clans in Mizoram and Manipur side did not join the newly formed political party. The tribes of Paihte and Pawih did not join it and have their

own clan-based political party. Meanwhile the Hmars in the Manipur were totally included in the Mizo Union, the Mizo Union was strengthened with the units in each of the Hmar dominated villages and there was no other clan-based politics for the Hmar tribes. “There was no separatism issue for the Hmars at that time for all they accepted themselves as Mizos.”¹² The Hmars gave full support to the Mizo Union with an expectation that a new state or political institution may be formed constituting all the Mizos together under one umbrella, for that purpose the Mizo Union was expected to achieve that future institution. They strived to separate themselves from the Manipur jurisdiction so that they could be under the Lushai Hills. Their attitude for separation pressed the then premiere of Manipur interim government, P.B Singh to open eyes on the Hmar political demand. He promised to create a Regional Council for the Hmars on the condition that they should detach themselves from the Mizo Union. The Mizo Union on the other hand was aware of the promised given by the Manipur premiere to the Hmars, then, they sent a delegation to the Hmars to propagate the promise that the expected Mizo District Council would include the Hmar area within its jurisdiction. H.K Bawihchhuaka was sent to Manipur and he campaigned for the Mizo Union, the Hmars of the Manipur asked P.B Singh, the destination of the regional council for the Hmars if created, it was clarified that the newly created Regional Council for the Hmars would automatically go under the Manipur government. This had made the Hmars reject a fruitful promise of the Manipur premiere for the creation of a Regional Council for the Hmars in Manipur.

Meanwhile there was an extreme communal feeling among the Mizos, there was suggestion that the name of Mizo Union should be changed to Lushai Union, Some Hmar analyst were worried about the future of the Hmars who were at the

¹² An interview with Mr.Hmingchungnung the ex-president of Hmar People’s Convention and the ex-chairman of Sinlung Hills Development Council on June 2, 2006

crossroads. They therefore, decided to form a Hmar Fenngo Federation for the Hmars, their leaders like H.Raltawna and Lalbuai were troubled by the growing ethnic-feeling among the Mizos and were aware of the possibility that the future of the Hmars could be spoilt. But as the suggestion for the change of the Mizo Union with the name of Lushai Union did not go through, the Hmar Fenngo Federation also did not last long, but its formation irrespective of its duration was an indication that the Hmars played a defensive politics since the beginning of their political consciousness. Their political affairs moved along with the politics of the Mizos and the future of the Hmar politics depended much on the acceptance by the Mizos. Their political status was not identified and their ambiguous national identity made their political problems inevitably depend on the politics of the Mizos.

The “Mizo District”, was created with effect from April 29, 1954. The Hmars in the Manipur side welcomed the newly-born District Council with an expectation that their habitat would be included in the boundary of the new District Council. But the new District Council easily accepted the already existing Lushai Hills Superintendent Area boundary for the boundary of a District Council, the Hmars of the Manipur side were outside the boundary and remained in Manipur, their exclusion in the newly formed District Council was confusing and did not convince the loyal Hmars thinking that they were neglected and left unwanted in contrast to their loyalty and utmost support for the Mizos and Mizoram. This could be traced as the beginning of the Hmar’s disappointment to the Mizos as their hope had been spoilt and ended by the Mizos. Hmingchungnung said “The hmars felt that the Mizos were in a hurry to take the advantage and overlooked the interest of the Hmar community who were the backbone of the Mizo lifeline in Manipur.”¹³ The Hmars in their desperation formed **the Hmar National Congress (HNC)** on

¹³ Ibid

July 3, 1954 which was later changed as **Hmar National Union** (HNU) on December 5, 1958. It was joined by many desperate Hmars in Manipur. The Hmar National Union was formed by the remnants of both the Hmar National Congress which was not active after their leaders took rest and the Mizo Union. It was the political union of the Hmars in Manipur which sought a relief from their grievances because of their being neglected and sought for the survival of the Hmars politically.

The Hmars though discontented over the Mizos always looked for a chance to unite with the Mizos in Mizoram. Mizoram was not totally eliminated from their inner feelings. When the MNF launched an armed struggle against the Indian union, many Hmars in Manipur joined their movement for a time being with a hope that a new day may dawn for the integration of all the Mizos and their cognate clans. ‘The Greater Mizoram’ policy of the MNF was heartily welcomed by the Hmars in Manipur and Assam and they put their effort to attain that objective. Zokhuma of Churachandpur wrote an article “Mizos (Including the Hmars) in Manipur always keep a lively hope that integration can be achieved only in Mizo National Front. Moreover, the MNF exposed us to the eyesight of the world and made us honorable amidst the other nations, it is our refuge....”¹⁴ The Hmars in states other than Mizoram are always in favour of the integration of the Mizos and look for every possible means to unite with the Mizos. As such they looked the MNF to carry out such viable means indicating that their loyalty for the Mizo nationality was not totally discarded due to their discontentment.

The Hmars in Mizoram at that time were not much interested in political affairs in relation to their counterparts in Manipur and Assam side. Their negligence of politics might be due to their position at that time. They were

¹⁴ An article of Zokhuma, churachandpur “*Lamka celebrates Mizoram statehood*” Zo ni eng (Weekly) Dt 13-20 May 1987. it was an article which reflects the attitude of the Mizos and Hmars in Manipur.

automatically under the Mizo District Council and were not treated separately; majority of the Hmars in Mizoram need not care for their status as they were treated equally. But the frustrated Hmars in their adjoining areas gradually won their hearts; and a feeling of sympathy for them in other state aroused their political awareness.

As the Hmars felt unsatisfied with the political leaders of the Mizos, they felt that their expectations would never be met. The Hmar People Federation (HPF) was established on June 15, 1977 by the youths of the Hmars to raise the demand for a separate district for the Hmars in Manipur, Tripura, and Assam. It gave birth to the Hmar People Congress in 1981. The demand of separate districts for the Hmars by the Hmar People Federation for the Hmars living in the states of Manipur, Tripura and Assam much convinced the Hmars of Mizoram and they formed units of Hmar National Union in many villages of the Hmar areas in Mizoram.

HMAR PEOPLE'S CONVENTION (HPC)

By 1965-66 the Mizo National Front launched their armed attack against Indian army in their struggle for independence. The MNF leaders felt the formation of many units of Hmar National Union in Mizoram area as an element of disintegration. They tried to curb the growth of the Hmar national feeling and started a campaign for its elimination. It was the time when the Hmars united together to fight against the MNF due to the death of H. Thanga Keivawm who was allegedly killed by the Mizo National Army as he was an activist of the Hmar National Union. The MNF sent Malsawma Kawlni to Senvawn and he convinced them to sit and wait for the MNF struggle against India. He persuaded them to support their activities as it was for all the Mizos and the cognate clans of the Mizos. During the prolonged struggle of the MNF, the Hmars once again felt

neglected and formed the Hmar National Union, Mizoram by 1979 at Vaitin, one of the villages constituted by majority of the Hmar population. The newly formed party was again requested by the Mizo National Army with a promise that they had to wait for the outcome of the MNF struggle for freedom.

The dawn of 1986 saw the agreement signed between the MNF insurgent groups and the Government of India, The return of the MNF with peace was highly expected to bring out their policy of 'Greater Mizoram', which included all the areas of the habitat of the Mizos and their descendants. The new state of Mizoram inherited the same boundary of the erstwhile Union Territory of Mizoram excluding the Hmar areas of Assam, Manipur and Tripura. The conditions of the Hmars living in different contiguous areas of the Hmar dominated areas who were keeping their full hope upon the MNF to bring the 'Greater Mizoram' were not much better than the previous ones. The Hmars felt led down and their frustrations reached its climax. Their dissatisfaction led to the beginning of the Hmar People's Convention which was a party to fight for their demand with armed struggle.

At the beginning it was aimed to bring all the Hmars together to put under one umbrella. The Mizoram Hmar conference was held at Vaitin on the 19th October, 1985. The Conference used 'Hmar Political future' as its theme. The conference held a view that to engage in active politics without a political party would be difficult. Then, they called for a convention at Sakawrdai on December 6, 1986. There they changed the Mizoram Hmar Association into Hmar People's Convention on the 18th December, 1986 with Laldinliena as its first President, Thangliensung as its Vice President, Malsawm Ralsun as its Secretary and JH Thanzama as the Treasurer. The newly born party contested the 1987 MLA election in Mizoram in three constituencies. The names of the candidates were J.Laldinlien, Thangliensung, and Malsawma Ralsun contesting in the Assembly Constituency of Suangpuilawn, Ratu and Bilkhawthlir respectively. But none of

them got elected. It was said that the idea behind the facing of election by a newly born political party was not to win an election in the three constituencies where they contested, but to spread their message of Hmar nationalism to the people. Its intention was fruitfully met in regards to Hmar nationalism and a feeling of togetherness was strongly born among the Hmars.

The Article II of the constitution of The Hmar People's Convention clearly lays down the aims and objectives of the Party. Firstly it aims at protection and uplift of the Hmar nation. Secondly, it aims at having a rule which should heal the Hmar nation. The third aim strives to protect socialism, secularism, democracy, sovereignty, unity and integrity. Their fourth aim is to have representatives in different legislative bodies like MDC, MLA and MP; and the fifth one is to accomplish the political expectations of the Hmars within the Indian Union. The motto of the HPC's is '*Nations by themselves are made*'. It was clearly seen from their Constitution that the Hmars of the Mizoram felt deprived of their economic rights, and the upliftment of the Hmars as a whole could never be met under the existing political structure of the then Mizoram Government. The accumulated discontentment also resulted in the long lasting wound that could never once again be healed under the Mizoram Government and they attempted to heal their wounds by themselves.

The hierarchical structure of the HPC is featured by The General Headquarters at the top which links all the members and the party men. There is a Central Executive Council which is the highest executive body of the HPC's next to the General Assembly. After the Central Executive Council, there is an Executive Working Committee consisting of all the Office Bearers of the HPC's who got elected at the HPC General Assembly and the two members to be appointed by the President from amongst the members of the Central Executive Council. Below that is the Block Headquarters Executive Committee known as

Block Executive Committee (BEC). There can be a Group Committee for those villages or towns having two or more Units to bring together the units of a village and Unit Committee is at the bottom. The Party has a flag colouring white and blue which shows the traditional dress of their forefathers. They use the six points star as their emblem which indicates the constant and unchanging North Star.

The first President of the Hmar People's Convention, J.Laldinlien was arrested by the state government in 1987. It was said that he was arrested because of his anti-national activities. He withdrew himself from his Presidential post. Meanwhile The Hmar People's Convention under the President ship of JH Thanzam submitted their first memorandum to the then Governor of Mizoram, Swaraj Kaushal on the 5th October, 1987. Soon after that the Hmar People's Convention got popular; the first General Assembly of the HPC was held at Sakawrdai village on April 13, 1988. They held a fresh election for the leaders post and the outcome of the election was as follows;

President	- Hmingchungnung
Vice President	- Thangliensung
General Secretary	- T.Thangtloung
Treasurer	- Thansung

The elected General Secretary T. Thangtloung declined the post and Malsawm Ralsun replaced him.

As claimed by the leaders of the Hmar People Convention, all they aspire for is to have an autonomous district for the Hmars dominated area under the sixth schedule of the Constitution of India. The Hmars felt that the three sub-clans of Mizoram viz. The Maras, The Lais and the Chakmas were empowered with the District Council under the sixth schedule of the Indian constitution, being their

counterpart in the northern side of the Mizoram and confined in a definite area, they felt that they deserved to get that very status of Autonomous District Council under the same schedule. Then, to put their demand of Autonomous District for the Hmars in reality, they submitted a memorandum to the Governor of Mizoram on October 5, 1987, to the Prime Minister of India (Rajiv Gandhi) on March 16th 1988, to the Chief Minister of Mizoram (Laldenga) on April 11, 1988 and to the Prime Minister of India (V.P Singh) on March 12, 1990 (Appendix IV)

‘SINLUNG POLITICAL TRAINING’ AND BEGINNING OF ARMED CONFRONTATION

By the time when the Hmar People’s Convention was set up, there was no concrete Unit at various levels. The organizational set up of the party was lacking a systematic set up. The Political awareness of the majority of the population was so low, especially among the Hmars living within the state of Mizoram. The necessity was felt by the leaders of the Hmar People’s Convention for the political training among the Hmar people, especially the youths and the youngsters. In 1988, the Party organized a political training under the guidance of Malsawm Ralsun, that political training was organized under the forest of Khawbawn. Many bachelors of the Hmars joined the political training, called as *Sinlung Political Training*. The HPC has attracted a large number of youths and a group of 50 volunteers was undergoing physical and political training. The camp though intentionally carried on clandestinely was overheard by the Government of Mizoram. The incumbents of the Government regarded the trainees and their activities as detrimental to the interest of the state as a whole. This was crucial for the Hmars, because of the previous experiences as a clan, where they met failure to meet their political demands. The action was regarded as misleading by the state Government, though

most of the Hmars regarded it as the beginning of the success of political demands of the Hmars.

When the *Sinlung Political Training* was over, the trainees from different villages went home and propagated the idea of togetherness of the Hmars. The people were politically awakened and the party soon became one of the trusted political organizations of the Hmars. By the end of 1988 the Hmar People's Convention was regarded as the saviour of the Hmar nationality, all the Hmar people within the HPC Demand Area admitted themselves under the umbrella of that newly born party. The leaders of the party, taking into considerations this togetherness actively pursued their memorandum and met the then Chief Minister of Mizoram, Laldenga on 20th June, 1988 who promised them that the Cabinet meeting will discuss the matter. But the MNF Government was overthrown from their ruling position. The new Government of state was formed by the Congress (I) under the Chief Ministership of Lalthanhawla. The new ministry could not settle the demands put up by the Hmar People's Convention. The Hmars felt let down and felt that their political future was at stake. In order to pressurize the Government, they resolved to call a Peaceful Bandh throughout the HPC Demand Area. It was called on March 28, 1989. The first phase of non-violence peaceful bandh lasted for twenty four hours. Thousands of Hmars gathered together and blocked the moving of vehicles at Sailutar Village.

The Mizoram Government countered that measure taken by the Hmar people and sent the Mizoram Armed Police. The clash between the Armed Police and the Hmar People resulted in the beginning of bloodshed and many innocent Hmar peoples were injured in the confrontation. Some of the casualties of the clash were taken to Churachandpur Hospital in Manipur for treatment. At this point, the starting of this armed confrontation was described by Hmingchungnung that it was a result of the misunderstanding by the Mizoram Government about the Hmars and

their demands. While the demands of the Hmars was to attain a status of Autonomous District Council under the Sixth Schedule only, the Mizoram Government misunderstood this demand. He stated that “The demand of the hmars for participation in self-governance was misunderstood as an intention to secede from the Mizoram state.”¹⁵

This incident aroused a feeling that the Hmar People’s Convention was an armed organization disguised as a Political Party to champion the cause of the Hmars. In the meantime some of the Hmar people living in various places other than the northern periphery of Mizoram were reluctant to support the Hmar actions because of the general misgivings among the Mizo mainstream. The Hmar People’s Convention did not give up their hope for a better status through the Autonomous District Council and called a second phase of non- violence peaceful bandh on April 18-19, 1989. The Hmars expressed their desire to establish an identity, separate from that of the Mizos. Their demands also included an Autonomous District Council in Hmar dominated area of the North Mizoram under Sixth Schedule. This second phase of bandh lasted for forty eight hours and the counter-measures taken by the Government had resulted in the Hmar volunteers being fled to the Forest. The volunteers were followed by the Mizoram Armed police and the gunbattle between the Hmar People Convention and The Mizoram police began on May 16, 1989 at Moniarkhal, where two Hmar volunteers and a sub-inspector of police were killed at the clash.

The rebel outfit of the Hmar has been encouraged by Thengleinkhuma, a Hmar leader close to former Chief Minister and MNF leader Laldenga. The HPC President JH Thanzam, now in Manipur and listed as a moderate leader of Churachandpur District of Manipur has been organizing the Hmars for armed

¹⁵ Hmingchungnung, *Aw Kan Hmar Ram* (Manipur, Published by Hranglienkhum Sinate Churachandpur, 1997) p. 60

struggle with Mizoram Government for Autonomous District Council. The Hmar National Union (HNU), an association of 20,000 Hmars scattered in Barak valley and North Cachar met at Fulertal (a foothill Village, 40 Km from Silchar) on June 28, 1989 under the Presidentship of LT Buhril, which was attended by the representatives of Cachar, Karimganj, North Cachar Hills and Manipur who expressed their support to HPC in its struggle.¹⁶ Moreover the Hmar outfits were establishing a nexus with the National Socialist Council of Nagaland (NSCN). The deep and inaccessible jungle of Cachar serves as a safe passage for assault in Mizoram and retreat to Manipur.¹⁷ Five HPC volunteers who were later identified as Leichung Hmar, Langlakta Hmar, Lalthungsen Hmar and Lalramlion Hmar were arrested at Lalpani on Cachar-Manipur border by a joint raid conducted by Assam Police and Village Defence Party of the locality on September 13, 1989. From the interrogation of the arrested persons, it was learnt that the militants were receiving training under Ex-Indian Army, Major Zuala. This has clearly showed that the Hmar outfits were receiving aid and assistance from different corners based on the principle of Hmar nationality, which created a lot of problems for the then Mizoram government for the checking of the movement.

The Government of Mizoram has ruled out the possibilities of conceding the demand for autonomy but expressed its willingness to sort out the genuine grievances of the Hmars. Lathanhawla, the Chief Minister of Mizoram, while rejecting their demand for a District-level autonomous unit, pointed out that the Hmars, except in one village, have no majority in northern part of Mizoram. Thanzam, the President of HPC, on the other hand, reacted that the state Government has rigged the census figures to manipulate the Lushai majority in North Mizoram in a bid to forestall the Hmar claim for an autonomous district

¹⁶ The Sentinel, Guwahati, July 5, 1989.

¹⁷ Ibid

covering five Blocks) comprising 13 villages in North Mizoram. However, the Government of Mizoram was willing to have a dialogue with the HPC on the autonomous question provided its members surrender the arms and ammunition and give up violence before any meaningful dialogue. The Hmar Students Union (HSU) was also active and was trying to stimulate interest among the students on the Hmar Problem. To bring this insurgency to an end, the first and the second Round of talks were held in 1991 at the initiative of the then Governor of Mizoram Swaraj Kaushal, but the talks failed. Though the former talks failed, the spirit thereof paves the way for the coming up of a Peace Committee. Later on, with the initiative of the Peace Committee consisting of representatives of various Church denominations in the demand area, peace talks were resumed in December 1992. In those days, with the use of a slogan “*For Peace to people*” Major HGV Singh of 2/11 Gorkha Rifles who was stationed at Jiribam, where the HPC leaders were available from their jungle hideouts, successfully convinced the HPC leadership to make peace in a meaningful way so that HPC’s political aspirations might be realized by peaceful means.¹⁸ After holding 14 rounds of peace talks, each talk sometimes lasting for days, the Government of Mizoram and the HPC signed a Memorandum of Settlement on July 27, 1994. The HPC insurgency, which had experienced an armed confrontation starting from April 29, 1989, was concluded on July 27, 1994, when the representatives of the HPC and Mizoram Government signed an agreement. The movement which led to the death of 44 volunteers as recorded by the HPCs has ended with an agreement, thereby, bringing together the Mizos and the Hmars under one umbrella.

MEMORANDUM OF SETTLEMENT

¹⁸ *Brief History of the Sinlung Hills Development Council* published by the HPC’s, 2002.

The Memorandum of Settlement signed by the Mizoram Government on the one hand and the Hmar People Convention on the other on August 11, 1994 was a documentary proof of a lasting agreement. This Memorandum of Settlement was signed by Lalfakzuala, the then Chief Secretary of Government of Mizoram on behalf of the state Government and Hmingchungnung, the President, Hmar People's Convention on behalf of the Hmar People's Convention. It included many clauses. A discussion on the major provisions of the operation is relevant here.

1. The main objective of the memorandum of settlement is to give adequate autonomy to the Sinlung Hills Development Council for Social, economic, cultural and educational advancement of the people under the jurisdiction of the Council.
2. With a view to restoring peace and normalcy in Mizoram, the HPC on their part agree to undertake, within the agreed time-frame, all necessary steps to end all under-ground activities, to bring out all underground personnel of the HPC with their arms, ammunition and equipments to ensure their return to civil life, to abjure violence and help in the process of restoration of normalcy. The modalities of bringing out all underground personnel will be worked out. The implementation of the foregoing will be under the supervision of the Government of Mizoram.
3. The HPC shall take immediate steps to amend, as may be necessary, its articles of Association / Constitution so as to make them conform to the provisions of law.
4. The Government of Mizoram will take steps for relief/rehabilitation of all HPC underground personnel who had joined the HPC prior to 18th, December, 1992, coming over ground an ex-gratia will be paid to the next of Kin/heirs/dependants of the HPC killed during the insurgency.

5. The HPC undertake not to extend any support to NSCN, ULFA and any other such underground groups by supply of arms or providing protection or any other matter.
6. With a view to satisfying the desires and aspirations of Hmar community in Mizoram, the state government will initiate measures for use of Hmar language as a medium of instruction up to Primary level and recognition of the Hmar language as one of the major languages of the state of Mizoram.
7. The Government of Mizoram will take steps for the promotion and preservation of Hmar culture and assistance may be provided as permissible under the rules by the Department of Art & Culture.
8. A new Civil Sub-Division will be opened at Sakawrdai and the Sub-Divisional Offices of different departments will also be established at convenient locations in the area. The Primary Health Centre at Sakawrdai will also be upgraded into 30 bedded Community Health Centre.
9. For the social, economic, cultural and educational development of the people in the North and North Eastern parts of Mizoram comprising an area to be specified and agreed upon by Government of Mizoram and HPC, Sinlung Hills Development Council will, by notification in the official Gazette, be constituted by the Government of Mizoram and separate fund will be earmarked for schemes which may be specified for implementation within the area of the Council.
10. The composition of the Sinlung Hills Development Council during the interim period of 2 years shall be as follows:-
 - 1) President, Hmar People's Convention- Chairman
 - 2) Any sitting MLA of the Area (to be nominated by the Government)- Vice Chairman

- 3) 17 nominated members from the area (14 members to be nominated by chairman of the council and 3 members by the Government)- Members.
- 4) All sitting MLAs of the area- Members
- 5) Representative of Finance Department- Member
- 6) Representative of planning department- Member
- 7) Representative of Rural Development department- Member
- 8) Deputy Commissioner Concerned- Member
- 9) Development Officer (Senior IAS or MCS officer) - Member Secretary.
11. The headquarters of the council shall, during the interim period of 2 years be Sakawrdai and it shall have a separate office with supporting staff. Permanent headquarters of the Council after the interim period shall be decided by the Government in consultation with the Interim Council. No salary or TA/DA will be admissible to the Vice Chairman and he will draw his salary and TA/DA as MLA from the budget of the Mizoram Legislative assembly. The other non- official members of the council will be entitled to such allowances as are admissible to the non-official members of the State Planning Board.
12. The Chairman of the Council will initially be the President, HPC, who will be provided with vehicle and residential quarters/ Bungalow and personal staff as determined by the Government. The Chairman will hold office for two years initially. Composition of the council and the manner of nomination/election of the chairman and members, after the expiry of interim period of two years shall be decided by the Government in consultation with the Interim Council. The term of office of the chairman and the Council shall be three years.
13. The powers and functions of the council will be as indicated below:-

- 1) To make plan out of the earmarked fund. The plan will be implemented by the Departments concerned. The plan made by the council will be subject to the approval of the Government.
- 2) To reallocate fund from one scheme to another within the area and within the sectoral allocation, provided that in case the proposed new scheme is not identical in nature with the approved scheme, approval of the government will be necessary;
 - 3) To draw up calendar of works for various departments in the area and oversee their implementation;
 - 4) To make recommendation to the Government as deemed necessary in the interests of better planning, implementation and monitoring;
 - 5) To obtain information from any officer in the area regarding progress of plan schemes;
 - 6) To review the progress of the area plan once in a quarter; and
 - 7) Any other function that the Government may allot from time to time.

Consequence of Memorandum of Settlement: In the aftermath of the Memorandum of Settlement, a series of meetings were held between the representatives of the Government of Mizoram and the HPC on July 29, 1994, August 3, 1994 and August 10, 1994 to discuss the question of implementation of the Memorandum of Settlement. The outcome of the meetings were such that;

1.
 - a) The HPC personnel along with their arms were to be received at Vairengte on the 13th September, 1994. After a night halt at Vairengte, they were to be brought to Aizawl on the 14th September, 1994.
 - b) The HPC delegation indicated that their underground personnel would come together at Ankhachhuah in Tipaimukh Constituency of Churachandpur District from August 16, 1994. While the Government would not take the responsibility for the safety, welfare, transport etc. of the

HPC underground personnel outside Mizoram. It would use its good offices to inform the Government of Manipur, Assam and Tripura and the security Forces operating in the area about the proposed surrender of arms and request them not to harass the HPC Volunteers.

c) List of arms with the HPC and list of HPC underground personnel would be brought to Aizawl on August 20, 1994 by HPC personnel who have thorough information about the arms and volunteers. The List would be verified by the Mizoram Government and the verification should be completed by 31st, August, 1994.

The Government and the HPC agreed on rehabilitation of the ex-Volunteers and the Ex-Gratia of the dead volunteers during an insurgency. The HPC personnel who had joined the HPC prior to 18th, December, 1992 and who came over ground were paid Rs. 30,000/- as rehabilitation grant. Next of kin/heirs/dependant of the HPC personnel killed during the insurgency would also be paid the same amount. It was agreed that the HPC personnel who were killed during the insurgency would be submitted to the Government on the 20th, August, 1994 for Verification. Accordingly, the HPCs submitted 44 names of volunteers who were killed in action. It was also agreed that dependants of HPC personnel killed during insurgency would be provided suitable jobs under the Government subject to the condition that; such personnel were from Mizoram, they will be adjusted against vacancies and no creation of additional posts will be involved; and the jobs to be provided can be anywhere in Mizoram, preference will be given to the HPC Volunteers from Mizoram who surrender consequent upon the signing of the Memorandum of Settlement in recruitment to Government posts provided they are eligible for employment.

The meetings also agreed that demarcation of the area of the Sinlung Hills Development Council shall be made comprising the area where the Population of

the Hmar is in majority. A Commission was appointed to conduct verification of the Hmar population in the HPC demand area with H. Raltawna, IAS (Rtd) as chairman, HC Thanhranga, Ex- Secretary Law and Judicial as member and Lalthanmawia, IAS (Rtd) as member Secretary. The Commission submitted its report on August 1, 1996. As such '*The Sinlung Hills Development Council*' was constituted in the early part of 1997 for the social, economic, cultural and educational development of the people under the jurisdiction of the Council as per para 5.4 of the Memorandum of Settlement. It is also mentioned that separate fund will be earmarked for schemes which may be specified for implementation within the area of the Council. The other agreements were arrived at the question of reinstatement of Government employees who were dismissed because of their involvement in HPC movement. It was decided that the matter will be discussed later. The Government delegates also agreed that the Government of Mizoram will, after surrender of arms, request the neighboring state Governments to take action as provided under Para 6.2 of the Memorandum of Settlement.

CONSEQUENCES OF THE SETTLEMENT

After the signing of Memorandum of Settlement, the HPC insurgency was put in to an end. The volunteers were paid rehabilitation as agreed upon by the settlement. Meanwhile, there was a point of disagreement over the compensation to be paid by the Government. The Government refused to pay compensation to 24 surrendered volunteers. The matter was raised by the HPCs in their meeting with the representations of the Government on March 21, 1995 and the matter was solved later on. The HPCs were also not satisfied with the proposed area of the Sinlung Hills Development Council by the Government. They were not satisfied with the functioning of the Council within Tuisualral area only. The dissatisfaction was strongly raised and the Government appointed a three men Commission to

conduct verification of Hmar Population in the HPC Demand Area. Based on the recommendations of the Commission, the Development Council was constituted by the State Government under a notification dated 27th. Aug. 1997 with its headquarter at Sakawrdai. The Council is safeguarded by adequate autonomy in the sphere of development, culture, Socio-economic and educational advancement of the people within its area and all these development prospects within the Council area is up to the Council administrators. Under this Council there are 46 villages which the Council caters their needs with allotted fund received from the state government every year.

The Sinlung Hills Development Council, constituted by the Government of Mizoram was the immediate step of relieving the pain of the Hmars in their claim for Autonomous District Council. It was constituted initially for an interim period of two years which was clearly laid down in the Memorandum of Settlement Para 5.5; it was rumored that steps will be taken by the Government to elevate the Development Council to the status of a full-fledged Autonomous District Council for the Hmars. But the matter was postponed till date. Expressing this status of 'Development Council' as 'unsatisfactory', Lalrosiem, HPC President on September 11, 2004 said that "Sinlung Hills Development Council is not what we are satisfied at..."¹⁹ This was a clear indication of the dissatisfaction of the Hmars who considered development Council as only a primary step to be taken to attain a status of Autonomous District Council. Hence, the HPC once again submitted their memorandum to the Government of Mizoram on their demand for Autonomous District Council under the Sixth Schedule of the Constitution, which has reached the President of India on 24th September, 2003. The President passed on the matter to the Ministry of Home Affairs. Moreover, the leaders of the Development Council blamed the Mizoram Government for interference into the post of

¹⁹ Laisuih, Weekly Magazine, Aizawl. Dated 11-17 September 2004, p.4

Chairmanship at the Council. The Memorandum of Settlement para 5.5 (2) which provided that the Vice Chairman of the Council shall be any sitting MLA of the area was modified by the Government and the HPC were allowed to have a Vice-Chairman of their own. Accordingly Lalrosiem was appointed as the Chairman and Khumte Hmar as Vice-Chairman of the Council respectively with a two year terms. But before the expiry of their terms, the Government appointed Hmingchungnung as the Chairman of the Council “which was a clear breach of the Memorandum of Settlement.”²⁰ Apart from this, the developmental factor was what the Hmars often raised. Lalrosiem expressed sternly that no development had taken place in the area during June, 1999 - August, 2004.²¹

The Hmar People’s Convention, which was an insurgent group for a time being, applied to the Election Commission for transforming itself to the political party. Hearing was held on September 19, 2003 and was transformed into a Political Party. It was registered as a political Party on September 22, 2003 under the Election Commission of India. At present the insurgent group of the Hmar is bound by the concrete rules and regulations that it can no more acts as an insurgent group.

Recent trend: The Hmar People’s 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 Hmar People’s Convention - Democracy (HPC-D) in 1995. This organization initially started demanding for creation of an autonomous district in the north and north-eastern region of Mizoram. Now it is demanding for an independent Hmar state consisting of the Hmar inhabited areas of Mizoram,

²⁰ Ibid

²¹ Ibid

Manipur and Assam. Although the outfit has a small number of cadres which may be in the region of 200 to 300, it has links with other insurgent groups in the region. It has alleged links with Bru National Army which operates from Mizoram. It has also links with the Zo ethnic militant groups which operate outside Mizoram. Its presence is conspicuous due to its animosity against the Dimasas in the Cachar and North Cachar Hills District of Assam.

The demand of the outfit is to involve the Union Government so that the provisions of the 1994 peace agreement can be implemented effectively. The HPC-D also intends to spearhead the movement for a separate state 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. This killing was followed by an apology to the families of victim that “the victims were suffering killing only because of the Mizoram Government” as stated by David L.Hmar, Information and Publicity Secretary of Hmar People Convention (D).²² It is impossible to make conjectures about the realization of such objective, though. The fact; however is that the Hmar people want Speedy resolution of all pending basic issues.

Conclusion: However, the Hmars, who considered themselves as the marginalized sections of the society showed their dissatisfaction at the present status. It is necessary on the part of the Government to find amicable and lasting solutions to the problems of the Hmars. Otherwise, it would be easy to re-experience the frustrations of the Hmars as an insurgency movement on account of the protracted discontentment of the Hmars which was a result of an accumulation of a long course of history. In the words of SN Singh

“Of course, the Hmars are late in projecting their autonomy demand. It is a post eighties development in the Hmar areas which was almost dormant in their minds earlier. A clearly perceptible unrest among the Hmar community

²² Vanglaini, Aizawl, Thursday, September, 2008.

due to the growing frustration has surfaced and a separatist tendency has developed these days."²³

Even after the Sinlung Hills Development Council was created, the Hmars are not fully satisfied and they raised their demand for the up gradation of Sinlung Hills Development Council into an Autonomous District Council, comprising an area of the Hmar dominated area in the Northern side of Mizoram. The Proposed area comprising of 30 villages was submitted to the Prime Minister of India on March 12, 1990. The memorandum severely condemned the past Ministries of Mizoram Government including the MNF ministry led by Laldenga and INC ministry led by Lalthanhawla. They submitted therefore that the Hmar people felt insecure without 'Autonomous District Council'. The last paragraph of the memorandum reads that;

'We, the Hmar people of Mizoram, therefore, strongly feel the urgent need to establish conditions in which we may also live in peace and prosperity and work out our destiny within the provisions of the 6th Scheule of the Constitution of India and fervently make an appeal to you to use your good offices for an early creation of an autonomous District to be called "HMAR AUTONOMOUS DISTRICT" in Mizoram comprising the Hmar occupied areas in the north and the North-West (as shown in the map provide herewith) bordering Manipur, Assam and Tripura in the best interest of preserving and protecting the rights and privileges of the minorities as envisaged in the constitution of India.'"²⁴

The Hmars are not satisfied with a mere status of Development Council under the interference of state Government in its administration. What they want is autonomy and this is what they have demanded since the beginning of their insurgency. Even after the signing of Memorandum of Settlement, their dissatisfaction over a mere Development Council was often shown by submitting memorandum to the Chief Minister of Mizoram (Zoramthanga) on January 27, 2000 (Appendix V), to the Governor of Mizoram on October 12, 2000 and to the

²³ R.N. Prasad, *Autonomy Movements in Mizoram* (New Delhi, Vikas Publishing House, 1994) p.126

²⁴ Memorandum submitted to the Prime Minister of India on 12.March.1990 by HPC Hqs. Sakawrdai.

Governor of Mizoram on October 25, 2001. All these memorandums focused on the dissatisfaction of the Hmar people on the creation of Sinlung Hills Development Council, the memorandums fervently asked the authorities to take every possible step for the formation of Hmar Autonomous District Council in place of the said Development Council. Lalrosiem, on behalf of the HPC Headquartes, Sakawrdai had sent a letter to the President of India APJ Abdul Kalam on September 24, 2003. His letter to the President of India expressed that The Mizoram Government turned a deaf ear to the Ordinance for grant of autonomy under Sixth Schedule under the Indian constitution which was already issued by the Mizoram Governor. He stated that “Since we are minorities in Mizoram and there is no political safeguard for the Hmars, we appeal to your good office for fulfillment of the above stated Governor’s ordinance and kindly accord the Sixth Schedule status to the Sinlung Hills Development Council.”²⁵

The various demands put up by the HPCs through their memorandums after the signing of Memorandum of Settlement has shown that the Hmars will never be fully satisfied without attaining a status of Autonomous District Council. The attainment of the said status was the only means to settle all the perpetual problems of the Hmars as said by the representative of the Hmars. Taking in view the various problems, the leaders of the Hmars stated that “Hmar District Council is the dragnet to overcome all the prevailing problems of the Hmars.”²⁶

Looking at the past history of the Hmars that resulted in the accumulation of discontentment, it is necessary to take care of their demands. It seems that the Hmars in Mizoram are having an integrationist tendency with their Lusei counterparts. Taking this sense of integrity as an advantage, the so called separatist tendency

²⁵ Letter to the President of India, Dr. APJ Abdul Kalam by Lalrosiem, President of H.P.C on September 4, 2003.

²⁶ Memorandum submitted to the Governor of Mizoram by HPC Gen Hqs. Sakawrdai, Aizawl on October 12, 2000.

among the Hmars can successfully be curbed through care in developmental activities and imbibing a spirit of brotherhood with the mainstream community of the Mizos. All care should be taken to check the social tension and economic crisis and implement measures to eradicate socio-economic imbalance in the state while formulating the socio-economic planning. Besides these, the Government of Mizoram should pay her efforts to implement any provisions of the Memorandum of Settlement which have not yet been implemented. It was necessary to see that no minorities including those who seek separation from the state keep up a growing frustration secretly which may at one time cause an act of insurgency.

....