

## **Analysis of Manifestos of Political Parties in Mizoram State Legislative Assembly Elections 2018**

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**Abstract:** Since political parties play a crucial role in a democratic state; the all-round development of the state is an important agenda for all political parties in a democracy. The goals and policies of the political parties are reflected in their election manifestos. Party manifestos are an important instrument of measuring levels of accountability of the political parties that formed the government. Also, political parties are evaluated based on their manifestos and this is an important tool for securing votes in the elections. This paper thoroughly analyses the manifestos given by political parties (five major political parties) that contested the 2018 Mizoram State Legislative Assembly Election. It also seeks to study if votes polled by political parties are based on their manifestos and how far the election manifestos have brought up or decrease the popularity of the parties that contested the State Legislative Assembly Election of 2018.

**Keywords:**

- Elections
- Political Parties
- Manifesto
- Policies
- Development

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### **I. INTRODUCTION:**

Election is an important part of democratic process. Political parties issue their agendas, goals and objectives to the voters in the form of election manifesto. It is a statement by political party what it will do if they win the elections. Political parties are evaluated and examined their performances based on their election manifestos.

Mizoram witnessed the Eight State Legislative Assembly Election on 28<sup>th</sup> November 2018. The BJP, the Congress, the Mizo National Front (MNF), NPP, NCP, PRISM, Zoram Peoples Movement (Independent), Zoram Thar and some independent candidates contested the election. There are 40 seats with 209 candidates out of which 191 are males and 12 are females<sup>i</sup>. The verdict of the result was that MNF has swept majority by securing 26 seats, the ruling Congress party managed to get only 5 seats, newly formed ZPM group secured 8 seats and for the first time, nationalist party i.e the BJP managed to mark its entry into Mizoram politics by securing one seat. Analysis of the election manifestos in this paper is made on broad themes of administration, economic policies, women, youth and education, health care policy and infrastructure development. Observations are based on the studies of election manifestos of five political parties namely the BJP, the Congress, the MNF, PRISM and the ZPM.

#### **Administration:**

The MNF party in its election manifestos talked about setting up of Lok Ayukta to fight against corruption; to make Aizawl Municipal Corporation (AMC) more powerful to ensure de-centralization of government and grading a status of areas that do not fall under district council as district development council; to exercise e-governance in a resourceful way; to shift out Assam Rifles from their present post; and to revise the Mizoram Land Revenue Act 2013 and to control and monitor Mizoram Urban Areas Rent Control Act<sup>ii</sup>.

The Congress Party in its election manifesto highlighted development of relief & rehabilitation department, monitoring of control of de-forestation, and growth in tourism by establishing Hotel Management Institute<sup>iii</sup>.

The BJP promised to resolve Mizoram- Assam state boundary disputes by setting up Central Defence University at Vairengte; and to uplift all the areas under administrative districts to the status of 6<sup>th</sup> Schedule Autonomous District Council; introduction of new traffic management system for Aizawl City; to upgrade the headquarters of all the districts and sub- divisions of Mizoram<sup>iv</sup>.

PRISM Party, which claimed that its agenda is to bring electoral reform talked in great length about administrative reforms. Major restructure within the Executive in the form of re-distribution of portfolios, administrative reforms, formation of Constituency Development Committee headed by MLA, to make Power & Electricity Department and Printing & Stationary as a Corporation, not as a department; introduction of land reforms in the form of distribution of lands to those who do not have lands<sup>v</sup>.

ZPM promised the people a government under the guidance of “*Val Upa*(elders)”; decentralization of power in the form of formation of Municipalities/ Boards in city areas, Panchayati Raj, Local Development Committee, Constituency Development Committee, District Development Committee. ZPM alone talks about the creation for separate Cadre for Mizoram in All India Service<sup>vi</sup>. Regarding anti- corruption measures, a detailed 14 points are laid down by the party.

### **Economic Policy:**

The main theme of the MNF’s economic policy was in the form of Socio- Economic Development Policy (SEDP)<sup>vii</sup> in which cash distribution of rupees 3 lakhs will be given to those economically lower section families to boost their economy in the field of agriculture, sericulture, animal husbandry, handloom & handicraft, carpentry and petty trading. Hardly changes in the economic policy was seen from the previous election manifestos from the MNF party.

The Congress Party just stressed on New Land Use Policy (NLUP) alone as its economic policy, saying there will be continuation of distribution of NLUP and guidelines of the policy would be revised<sup>viii</sup>.

The BJP did not clearly mention the economic policy alone but the promise of Agricultural Land Reform, promoting private set-up industries by providing loans.

PRISM party stressed on taking advantage of “Look West Policy” by setting up Tlabung Border Trade Centre so that maximum economic benefits could be gained by India. “Regulated Market System” would be introduced to solve the problem of selling the agricultural products by the farmers. To fulfil and implement UNO’s 2030 target of 17 Sustainable Development Goals for removal of poverty and self-sufficiency in food consumptions<sup>ix</sup>.

ZPM has framed its economic policy based on ‘six basic needs’ introduced by Brig. T. Sailo, the then president of PC Party. Introduction of ‘hand-holding policy’ meaning responsibility lies on the government in guiding the people. Unlike the Congress and the MNF, the ZPM did not promise the voters any cash-distribution policy but promised the cultivators to help out in terms of distribution of harvested goods. Proper implementation of industrial policy was laid out in the party manifesto and the party promised to help “anybody who can do it” for their economic sustenance<sup>x</sup>.

### **Women:**

In the 8<sup>th</sup> Mizoram State Legislative Assembly Election, out of 209 candidates and only 15 were females. This clearly shows the low participation of women in Mizoram politics. The BJP party did not mention anything about women issues in their manifesto. Even the Congress Party in their 21-points manifesto addressed women issues in the form of giving assistance to widows, and they fielded one women candidate out of 40. The MNF party talked about protection of the rights of women and children and they failed to give seats to women. PRISM party promised to uplift the status of women in Mizo society, and medical & nutrition assistance to pregnant women, maternity benefits to those who are employed in public as well as private sectors. ZPM party mentioned that as the guidelines given by Central Government under Women Employment Policy, financial assistance will be given to women.

### **Youth & Education Policy:**

The MNF Party stressed on ‘Man Power Development’ and achievement of this through development of sports infrastructures, promoting entrepreneurship among the youth, incentive awards to promote central and all India services, and to build hostels in every district capital for the students<sup>xi</sup>. The MNF party pledge to revise the school education calendar according to the convenience and the needs of the Mizo society as a whole. Strengthening the existing education institutions by solving the problems of lack of teachers in rural areas, promotion of medical, paramedical, engineering, technology and management courses.

The Congress party promised to build rehabilitation centres and counselling centres to curb down substance abuse that has high impact among the Mizo youths. Besides the on-going sports schemes and promotions done by the Congress Ministry, the party promised to promote motor sports by making racing tracks. Promotion of music and fine arts is also mentioned in their manifesto<sup>xii</sup>. Education policies such as distribution of free laptops to all the students passing class 10 and class 12, promotion of science, mathematics and technical courses, separate budget for study tours for college and university students are the important points.

The BJP party promised the youth to give permanent employment, to distribute 'special scholarships' among the youth who have high potentials in sports, to build a high standard of sports stadium in each MLA constituencies, to give free laptops/smartphone to all the students of class 10 and class 12 passed out in distinction marks in every subject, opening of south campus branch of Mizoram University at Lunglei, upgrading MIMER into Central Medical College. BJP party has mentioned in detail their education policy by enhancing facilities in rural areas for quality education in the form of Public Private Partnership, to provide high-tech learning equipment's in schools, introduction of career-oriented vocation syllabus in schools, separate directorate for Primary, middle and high school level for better monitoring. Besides, the party promised to make the Youth Commission more powerful than the existing one<sup>xiii</sup>.

PRISM party promised to create not less than one lakh, fifty thousand permanent employment to the youth, and disbursement of unemployment allowances from 2020. In order to promote youth seeking jobs outside the state and at all India level, the party promised to help out by setting up International Quality Examination Centre and Visa Processing Centre. Education Reforms, re-structuring of Mizoram Public Service Commission, promotion of sports discipline and tourism are the main policy focusing the youth<sup>xiv</sup>.

The ZPM under the Youth policy has put up 23 points in which it could help the youth of Mizoram in achieving their capacity, and under Sports 5 points are laid out. Detailed policies like capacity building programme, job counselling centres, developing entrepreneurship banks, opening of recreational centres and providing reliable and truth-worthy vocational training providers/ agencies. Increase of sports budget, development of sports infrastructure would be provided under Infrastructure Development Fund, and proper utilization of National Sports Policy are the important policies laid out by the party<sup>xv</sup>. The party also in great length talks about the necessity of education reformation to provide quality and employable education in 11 points policy such as controlling fee hike in private institutions, introduction of Three Language Formula, application of work education for development of individuals skills, introduction of different technical courses at the higher level, providing education loan to the students, giving more incentives to students trying for all India services, and introduction of Mizoram Education Service<sup>xvi</sup>.

#### **Health Care Policy:**

The MNF party stated that setting up of rehabilitation centres as utmost importance and put a blame on selling of liquor under MLPC Act, 2014 and alleged this as the reason for increase in substance abuse among the Mizos. Development of the existing government hospitals and health centres, recruitment of more doctors and nurses to end shortage of medical staffs, and continuation of Mizoram Health Care are some of the important policies laid down by the party<sup>xvii</sup>.

The Congress party highlighted the establishment of Mizoram Institute of Medical Education & Research as the party commitment to health care facility in Mizoram. Regular service of air ambulance for medical emergencies for rural areas, proper utilization of health care facilities provided by the Congress government are the important points highlighted<sup>xviii</sup>.

The BJP party just has one point regarding health policy in which the party pledge to upgrade MIMER as a central medical college.

PRISM party promised to revise and restructure Mizoram Health Care Society. To solve the problem of shortage of medical doctors at different parts of the state and recruitment would be done at the earliest. hospitals and health centres will be upgraded in terms of service conditions<sup>xix</sup>.

ZPM promised to increase the Bill amount to rupees 5 lakhs under National Health Protection Scheme. The party pledge to set up proper drug testing laboratory and to upgrade health care institutions. The party also pledge to promote traditional medicines by introducing research team and promotion of the growth of medicinal plants<sup>xx</sup>.

#### **Infrastructure Development:**

The MNF party gave utmost importance to road development; highways such as East-West corridor, North- South National highways would be developed and widened. Agricultural link roads will be built for easy accessibility for the rural farmers. Modernization and infrastructure development of Lengpui Airport would be given importance and construction of new airport in Lunglei for southern Mizoram. Efforts would be made by the party in order to achieve self sufficiency in hydro/ solar/renewable energy. Big storage for LPG bottling plant, FCI godowns to provide the demands of the state as whole will be built by the party. Not only that, the party pledge to work in availing natural gas and oil resources which is available within the state<sup>xxi</sup>.

The Congress party pledged the continuation of free housing schemes for poor at rural and urban areas, modernization of maintenance of power lines and bill payments. Priority will be given to solar energy at the same time not neglecting hydro-electric power. Proper assessment and evaluations of projects that are given out the different departments of the government and upgrading the functioning of the State Planning Board for efficiency<sup>xxii</sup> should be the priority of the party.

The BJP party pledge to improve the road conditions of the state with proper monitoring and invigilation of construction and repairing of road ways. To achieve self- sufficiency in clean drinking water, the party promised to build storages for water harvesting. Hydel projects like Bairabi and Kolodyne Hydro Electric Power would be completed from Prime Minister's Special Package. PM's special packages for rural poor like free housing and free LPG connection would be given<sup>xxiii</sup>.

PRISM party has highlighted 9 points for infrastructure development which focus on self-sufficiency in hydro- electric power by completing Bairabi HEP, Tuivai HEP and Kolodyne Phase II HEP. Importance will be given to the development of solar energy which could be more useful for rural farmers. Initiative would be taken by the party for setting up Paper Mill, Saw Mill and Plywood Mill. Road Policy would be created, and new construction of roads will be done according to the needs of the situation, at the same time strengthening the existing roads that connects the state with the neighbouring states and international states. Upgrading of Lengpui airport and construction of a new airport in the southern Mizoram are some of the important focus given by the party regarding infrastructure development<sup>xxiv</sup>.

The ZPM party talked in great length about infrastructure development focusing on 17 areas such as power projects and power generation, roads and bridges, water supply projects, airfields, industries and factories, godowns and warehouses, depots, market buildings, ropeways, Aizawl City Plan, town and village plan, cold storages, PSUs, hospitals and sports facilities<sup>xxv</sup>.

## **II. CONCLUSIONS & OBSERVATIONS:**

Mizoram election scenario has a typical voting trend and usually voters cast their votes on family, clan, relative, village based rather than looking at the policies of the political parties. Therefore, it is observed that not much change has been seen in the election manifestos of the prominent and dominant political parties like the Congress and the MNF from their previous election manifestos. It looks like manifestos are prepared for the sake of having it, not for the intention of achieving it. Development in connectivity and power is the need of the state at this time. Enhanced policies are framed by all political parties towards self- sufficiency in power and electricity, and road transport. The present government of the state should be evaluated and analyse on the basis of their agenda mentioned in the manifesto.

From the outcome of the election result, the voters are more attracted towards free-cash distribution policy; and rupees 3 lakhs (SEDP by the MNF) was more preferred by the voters than rupees 1 lakh (NLUP by the Congress). Also, it is a known fact that the economic policies laid down by the political parties hardly have any impact upon the voters that either the Congress, the MNF or the PC Party who were in power before did not really bothered about what they promised to the voters in their election manifestos. The ZPM that has one of the most detailed economic policy hardly attracts voters from the rural areas. 7 seats out of total secured 8 seats are won from Aizawl town itself.

Youth empowerment and education policies are almost the same in all the manifestos. Education policy that is stable and applicable throughout the state is needed. Changing school calendar along with change in the government will not solve the problems that primary and elementary education is facing. The state must work out in providing quality education that will produce employable youth inside as well as outside the state.

The issue of empowerment of women in political field is another agenda to address. All political parties incorporated empowerment of women or women development scheme or protection of women in their manifestos. Prominent parties like the Congress had one women candidate, MNF zero and ZPM with one female candidate. This raised important questions –real empowerment of women is neglected by every political parties and, that the Mizo society differentiate the role between male and female in terms of politics and public realm. Also, the reality of women to women acceptance in political realm is also absent among the Mizos.

Also, Mizoram has witnessed a different, rather peculiar electoral politics, where political parties charging each other on the issue of religion, ethnic minority issues, alliances, 'hnam' issue, alcohol, instead of focusing on the real issues. The "blame game" played by all political parties in some way turned out in the favour of some of the parties and for party like the Congress, it reduced their vote banks drastically. The accusation of BJP as anti-secular and pro- Hindu party, blaming the BJP as playing ethnic minority politics that even YMA had to involve, the accusation of MNF's alliance with NEDA and called them as puppet of anti-secular party etc. The "Hnam Hnatlang" called by All NGO Co-ordination Committee on 6th November 2018 turned in favour for ZPM and MNF, the involvement of Church in alcohol policy also reduced the popularity of the Congress party.

To keep a check on the performance of political parties who are in power, evaluation of the performances of the government can be done using the election manifestos as a yardstick. Media, both print and visual media have important role in this, as they are the channel that can give awareness to the voters. Voters also should cast their votes by analysing the manifestos of the political parties. One can conclude that the voting trends in Mizoram is not solely based on policies laid down in the manifestos, even political parties tend to

ignore in framing sound and reasonable policies for the development of the state and work towards achieving them.

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