



## DIRECTORATE OF INFORMATION & PUBLIC RELATIONS

Government of Mizoram

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### **SPEECH OF PU LALDUHOMA, CHIEF MINISTER, MIZORAM ON MIZO DAY, MARYLAND, USA, 2.09.2024**

1. My dear brothers and sisters, my beloved kinfolk,

On behalf of my family and the people of Mizoram, I extend my heartfelt greetings to each and every one of you. Thank you for taking the time out of your busy schedules and for traveling here at your own expense to join us for the Mizo Day celebrations of 2024.

As many of you may recall, the then Chief Minister of Mizoram, Mr. Lal Thanhawla, traveled to the United States with his wife to participate in Mizo Day in 2010. I was honored when you graciously invited me to be the Chief Guest for the 2020 celebrations. Unfortunately, due to the COVID-19 pandemic, I couldn't be with you in person, and on September 7, 2020, I joined you virtually from the LPS Studios in Aizawl. Today, my wife and I are truly blessed to be here in person. We are deeply grateful for the warm welcome we have received, so much so that we feel humbled by the honor and respect you have bestowed upon us.

Now that we are all gathered here, let us solemnly commit ourselves to strengthen the bonds of brotherhood and unity among all Zo people and ethnicities.

2. At the outset, I regret to inform you that my stay here in the United States will be brief since there is much work that awaits me back home, as I am sure you can all imagine. This constraint of time also prevented me from attending the Chin New Year festival earlier for which the Chin

Community, USA had invited me, or from participating in the Chin Cultural Day event in Indianapolis scheduled for October, 2024. I am, however, grateful to the communities that have extended these kind invitations.

I would like to mention that my presence here is with the permission of the Ministry of External Affairs, Government of India. I have shared my itinerary for this visit with the MEA. Additionally, the Consul General will be accompanying me for certain events as needed.

I also have important talks lined up in Washington DC with the United States Trade and Development Agency (USTDA). I will hardly have time for sightseeing and other recreational activities.

Due to the limited time available, I regret that I will be unable to meet with individuals, groups or congregations separately or attend social gatherings such as dinners. Keeping this in mind, I earnestly invite every one of you to attend the scheduled events in Maryland and Indianapolis. Please remember that my visit to the United States is for all of you. My invitation is extended to everyone and is not directed at any specific individual or group. I am hopeful that these meetings will provide a valuable opportunity for open interaction, discussions, and the exchange of ideas.

3. The Bible at Acts 17:26 (NV) says, “From one man He created all the nations throughout the whole earth. He decided beforehand when they should rise and fall, and he determined their boundaries.” Accordingly, our origin as Zo people is of the subjects we are going to discuss today – Who we are and whether fate/mother nature facilitated our descent from a common ancestor.

(i) Lushai/Mizo :

The term ‘Lushai’ is not our generic name originated from us, but was the name how foreigners called us. It was derived from ‘Lusei’ and given to us by foreigners. Hence, this term is not inclusive as it refers to just one of the many sub-tribes of the Zo people, i.e. the Lusei.

In the very first Census of India in 1901, no one in Mizoram identified themselves as 'Mizo'. Instead, people identified with their specific sub-tribes, such as Lusei, Hmar, Ralte, Paite, Pawite, Mara, and so on.

In 1946, the Mizo Union, Mizoram's first political party, was established. It was then that the term 'Mizo' was officially adopted as our nomenclature to encompass all sub-tribes within the Zo family. As time passed, 60 years after the first national census, the 1961 census reflected that 88.5% of the people in Mizoram identified themselves as Mizo. Amazing fact is that among those Mizo, no one uses 'Mizo' as their surname. Hence, 'the term 'Mizo' simply is all-inclusive term that refers to a group of people.

## (ii) Kuki/Chin :

128 years ago, the Chin Hills Regulation of 1896 recorded that - "Chins include Lushais, Kukis, Burmans domiciled in the Chin Hills and are habitually resident in the Chin Hills."

120 years ago, GA Grierson wrote that, "The term Kuki is an Assamese or Bengali word applied to such hill tribes of Lushais, Rangkhols, Thados etc. who were residing within India. On the other hand, Chin is a Burmese word which is used to denote all various hill tribes living in country between Burma and the provinces of Assam and Bengal. The word Kuki and Chin are thus synonymous and are both primarily used for many of the hill tribes in general. Therefore, the word Kuki-Chin was coined and employed by early researchers."

**Ref :** GA Grierson, *the Linguistic Survey of India, 1904, Vol III, part III, p 1,2,3, Calcutta Printing Press, 126.*

76 years ago, the Chin Hills Act of 1948 recorded that - "Chins refer to the indigenous ethnic groups inhabiting the Chin Hills region in Western Burma. These groups include – Chin, Kuki, Lai, Mara, Matu, Mizo, Zomi.

The Act defined Chins as the various ethnic tribes residing in the Chin Hills District, who share cultural, linguistic and historical ties."

55 years ago, Mr. Zahrelan was the Chin Affairs Minister, he was a Cabinet Minister. He also served as Ambassador to France, Holland, Spain, Egypt, Nepal etc. He eventually sought political asylum in the United States due to his opposition to the policies of General Ne Win while he was serving as Ambassador to Nepal in 1975. Mr. Zahrelan wrote that "The Burmese used

the term 'Chin' for official purposes, but the Chin people never used this term to refer to themselves. In fact, the word 'Chin' does not exist in any of the dialects spoken by the Chin people”.

**Ref :** *Chin Dictionary and Grammer by M. Paris, 1969.*

37 years ago, BS Carey wrote, “These Chin Tribes (called Mizo in India) led an uninhabited existence till the end of 19<sup>th</sup> Century, when the British Administrators undertook Surveys and Expeditions and demarcated boundaries (1935) for their administrative purposes dividing the same people into Lushais (Mizos) and Chins in India and Burma respectively.”

**Ref :** *BS Carey and HN Tuck. The Chin Hills Vol 1, inner flapped, 2nd para, 1987.*

From the above, it can be deduced that the terms 'Lushai', 'Kuki', 'Chin' etc., are not our generic names but names given to us by other people. We did not carry these names in the past and it appears that it is only with the passage of time that we have come to accept them as such.

### **(iii) ZO :**

In 862 AD, or 1162 years ago, the Chinese historian Fan Cho, who documented the history of the Indo-Burman region, used the term “Zo” to refer to our ancestors.

**Ref :** *Chin Hills Linguistic Tour, 1954, University Project by G.H Luce and Journal of Burma Research Society XL11, June 1959 p.i.*

In 1783 or 241 years ago, Roman Catholic father Vincent used the word 'Zo' in one of his writings.

### **Ref**

**: V.Sangermanoi : A description of the Burmese Empire, edited by Jardine, Rangoon, p 43.**

133 years ago, Rundall, Northern Chin Hills Political Officer wrote that “I do not know the origin of the word 'Chin'; probably had its origins in the Burmese language. Even Chin people themselves did not know what it

meant; they called themselves 'Zo' or 'Zote' in plural form, when referring to more than one person.

**Ref** : *F.M.Rundall : Manual of the Siyin Dialect in the Northern Chin Hills, Rangoon, 1891.* Rev. JH Lorraine (Pu Buanga), the first missionary to enter Mizoram, compiled the first Mizo dictionary 130 years ago in 1894, wherein he remarked that the word 'Zo' refers to Luseis and the tribes that surround the Luseis.

**Ref** : *J.H Lorrain : Dictionary of Lushai Language, 1940, Calcutta Asiatic Society, Aizawl, TRI 1982 p 560.*

129 years ago, in 1895, BS Carey wrote that "Zo" is the common term used by the Chin people to refer to themselves.

**Ref** : *B.S Carey and H.N Tuck : A history of the people, our dealings with them, their customs and manners, and the Gazetteer of the Country, TRI Aizawl, 1976 p 23.*

120 years ago, in 1904, Grierson, an administrator and linguist who was among the first to study the languages of India, noted that, similar to the Luseis and the Chins in the North, the Zahau tribe also referred to themselves as 'Zo'.

**Ref** : *G.A Grierson : Linguistic Survey of India, Vol III, Part III, p 109.*

112 years ago in 1912, Thomas H. Lewin (Thangliana) who was the head of the British Expedition to the Mizo Hills in 1871-1872 wrote, "The generic name of the whole nation is 'Dzo'".

**Ref**

: *Thomas H. Lewin : A fly on the wheel or how I help to govern India, TRI,*

*Aizawl, 1912, p 248*

Mr. Vum Ko Hau, who was the Burmese Ambassador to France, Cambodia, Indonesia, Australia, Hungary between 1955-1975 and who was, in fact, the first among the 'Zo' people to hold such an esteemed position, lamented that if only the people referred to as Zo (Chin) by the Chin Hills Gazetteer, and the Kukis were simply called 'Zo', which is the

correct nomenclature for such tribes of Burma, East Pakistan (Bangladesh) and Assam, many of the issues of identity faced by the people would have been resolved.

**Ref :** *Vum Ko Hau : Profile of Burma Frontiersman, Bandung, 1963, p 297.*

The first World Zomi Conference held in Champhai on 18<sup>th</sup> -19<sup>th</sup> May, 1988 unanimously resolved and accepted 'Zo' as the nomenclature to refer to all Zo people.

From the record and points cited above, it is apparent that 'Zo' is our original, generic name. Even commonly used phrases like 'Zo tui thiang, Zo thlifim, Zo ar, Zo artui, Zo vawk, Zo siam, Zo puan etc., reflect this contention. You may also recall that when Mizoram was declared a Union Territory, the vehicle registration numbers were all ZRM/ZRG, referring to Zo Ram.

The ZPM stands for Zoram People's Movement, not Mizoram People's Movement. Keeping these sensitivities and nuances in mind, our leaders took great pains to conceptualize, with much forethought and application of mind, the name of our party.

I am not putting forward any radical proposals or make specific suggestions. My aim is simply to encourage those who are more knowledgeable and have greater resources than I do to reflect on the points I've raised and carry this discussion forward to its logical conclusion. Nomenclature is not something that can be imposed, especially when it comes to deciding what our collective identity should be. However, I remain hopeful that one day, we will find a common name or nomenclature that we all identify with and are proud to embrace.

#### **4. Land occupied by Zo people:**

Lt. Col A.S Reid recorded the area occupied by/inhabited by 'Zo' people in India, Burma and Bangladesh as follows:

21° - 24°N Latitude

92° - 94°E Longitude

The Memorandum submitted by ZORO to the United Nations on 20-05-1995 contended that this land area measures 1,45,600 sq.km.

It is difficult to pinpoint our exact population due to problems in obtaining accurate and up-to-date Census data but is estimated to be around 50 lakhs.

We have been living contiguously with no other nations or tribes in between us till today. Another feature worth noting is that we all received the Gospel within a span of ten years.

### **5. Language :**

We are divided into the R and G groups i.e., those who put 'A' at the end of male names and those who use 'I' at the end of female names to identify their sex.

Every sentence has a subject, object and verb in dialects. Linguists claim that tribes whose languages do not have these parts of speech in the same order or sequences cannot be from the same ethnic or linguistic stock. In the dialects of the 'Zo' people, the Object is first, the Subject is second, the Verb is last, and the order is OSV. In English, this order is arranged as SVO.

Just like nomenclature, a common language for all the 'Zo' people cannot be forced upon anyone; it has to take its own natural course.

There are many indications that our ancestors once spoke a common language, as seen in the words used in our old songs.

I am pleased to mention here that the ZPM Government is planning to establish an official body to investigate and examine the origins of the Zo-people.

### **6. Chin-Lushai Conference 1892 :**



During the British occupation, 132 years ago on 29-01-1892, the Chin-Lushai Conference was held at Fort William, Calcutta. The participants were –

Lt. Governor of Assam Commander-in-Chief, Madras  
Chief Commissioner of Assam Chief Commissioner of Burma Foreign  
Secretary

Military Secretary

Quarter Master General in India

Recognizing that we Mizos, or Zo people, were distinct from both the Burmese and mainland Indians, they decided to establish a separate administration for us under the Commissioner of Assam, with the condition that roads be constructed first. However, this plan never came to be accomplished. We now find ourselves divided among India, Burma (Myanmar), and Bangladesh.

## **7. The Freedom Movement :**

(i) The first among the 'Zo' people to fight for freedom was Pu Hrangnawl of Thantlang, a Member of Parliament (MP) from Chin Hills. Mr. Hrangnawl and Lt. Col Sonkhopau and 30 soldiers were trained in East Pakistan (Bangladesh) in 1964 and the Provincial United Chin Government was established which comprised of the following members:

Prime Minister – Tunkhopum Biate Defense Minister – Lt. Col. Sonkhopau  
Foreign Minister – Hrangnawl.

Sonkhopau was arrested by the Assam Rifles in Nagaland while Tunkhopum died in a MNF camp.

(ii) The MNF declared independence in 1966 and ultimately settled with the Indian Government by signing of the Memorandum of Settlement in 1986.



(iii) Tripura National Volunteer was formed in 1983 under the leadership of Bijoy Kumar Hrangkhoh. They too came to an agreement with the Indian Government on 12-08-1988.

(iv) Chin National Front was formed on 20-03-1988 followed by other revolutionary groups fighting for freedom.

(v) In Manipur, KNO, UPF, ZRF and others are some of the organisations that have been formed.

## **8. Vision :**

Today, let us unite in the recognition that we are one people, one family, and loudly proclaim this truth to the world.

We are people who share common victory cry (Hlado) and sacrificial practices; people who are bonded by our practices of burying the dead with a common belief of life after death through the concept of 'Pialral'. We are tribes who are presided over by our chiefs; with identical folklores and tales, celebrating and observing similar festivities. Our nuptial arrangements entail a peculiar feature wherein the groom has to shell out a specified amount of his wealth to the bride in marriage. We are people who all construct our houses elevated from the ground with a hearth comprising of three stones. We are united by our common practice of creating fire-control-lines before burning our jhumlands. We take pride in the fact that we all help each other out by turns while working on our fields. And yes, we all were, once upon a time – headhunters.

The main objective of ZORO Movement in 1988 was Zo-Reunification within India. Can the 'Zo' people in India, Burma and Bangladesh today, aspire to be re-united under India? Looking at the geo-political realities of our time, it may not be so farfetched to think this could be a possibility one day. Perhaps fate has this reunification in store for us in the future. Also, I am not oblivious to the huge responsibility I bear in this regard, towards contributing to making this dream a reality. For now, I can only say that I eagerly await the day and time when the question I have posed above is answered.

## 8. Vote of thanks :

As you are all aware, our brothers and sisters from Burma, Bangladesh and Manipur have come to us in Mizoram for their safety. We currently have over 40,000 displaced people under our care.

In this regard, I would like to thank the Hon'ble Prime Minister of India, the Hon'ble Home Minister and the Hon'ble Finance Minister for taking care of our guests and for their sincerely hearing our pleas for help.

No less has been the collective efforts of those of you in the United States who have generously donated time, money and resources to help your displaced brothers and sisters in Mizoram, for which the people of Mizoram and I are immensely grateful.

May the Lord bless all of you, Thank you.

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Posted by: K. Saitluanga, MIS, PIO to Chief Minister ([https://dipr.mizoram.gov.in/posts?author\\_user\\_id=21](https://dipr.mizoram.gov.in/posts?author_user_id=21))

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