

# The Zoram People's Movement: The New Government of Mizoram

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## Abstract:

The Zoram People's Movement (ZPM) represents a significant shift in the political landscape of Mizoram, India. This thesis explores the emergence and evolution of ZPM, an alliance initially formed by six regional parties under the leadership of MLA and former IPS Officer Lalduhoma. With a focus on secularism and the protection of religious minorities, ZPM has challenged the traditional political powerhouses in Mizoram by advocating for a new, corruption-free governance model. The 2023 Mizoram Legislative Assembly elections marked a turning point for ZPM, as it secured 27 out of 40 seats, establishing itself as a dominant force in the state's politics. This study aims to analyze the factors contributing to ZPM's rapid rise, its ideological stance, and its impact on the governance and social fabric of Mizoram. Through a comprehensive examination of ZPM's objectives, organizational structure, and policy initiatives, this thesis seeks to understand the broader implications of ZPM's success for regional politics in Northeast India.

## Summary:

The Zoram People's Movement (ZPM) is a political alliance in Mizoram, India, formed under the leadership of MLA and former IPS Officer Lalduhoma. It was established as a coalition of six regional parties with the aim of creating a political alternative to the Mizo National Front and the Indian National Congress in Mizoram. The party advocates for secularism, the protection of religious minorities, and has a strong stance against Hindutva-nationalism. In the 2023 Mizoram Legislative Assembly elections, ZPM won 27 out of 40 seats, with Lalduhoma becoming the Chief Minister. The party has also been successful in local governance, winning all 11 wards in the newly formed Lunglei Municipal Council. ZPM's ideology encompasses anti-Hindutva nationalism, secularism, conservative Christianity, and the Christian right, focusing on the rights of minorities. The party has also campaigned for the re-imposition of a ban on liquor in the state. Initially starting as an alliance, ZPM later merged into a single political entity, aiming to address various issues in Mizoram and represent a shift in the state's political dynamics.

## Introduction

The Zoram People's Movement (ZPM) has emerged as a transformative political force in the state of Mizoram, India. Founded in 2017 and officially registered in 2019, ZPM represents an alliance of six regional parties that coalesced under the leadership of Lalduhoma, a former IPS Officer and MLA<sup>1</sup>. This thesis introduces ZPM as a political alternative to the traditional powerhouses in Mizoram, namely the Mizo National Front and the Indian National Congress, with a vision to establish a new paradigm of governance.

**History:**

In 2017 ZPM was founded as an alliance of six regional parties, aiming to provide a political alternative to the Mizo National Front and the Indian National Congress in Mizoram. In 2018, The alliance made its electoral debut in the Mizoram Legislative Assembly elections, supporting independent candidates and winning 8 seats. 2019 saw ZPM transitioning to a Political Party where ZPM was officially registered with the Election Commission of India as a political party, after initially starting as a non-political entity focused on social concerns. In 2020 some members of the Zoram Nationalist Party left the alliance due to internal issues, highlighting the challenges ZPM faced in its early years.

In 2023 ZPM witnessed electoral success and governance where the party won a significant victory in the Mizoram Legislative Assembly elections, securing 27 out of 40 seats, which led to Lalduhoma becoming the Chief Minister of Mizoram. The party also won all 11 wards in the newly formed Lunglei Municipal Council, demonstrating its growing influence in local governance.

Throughout its history, ZPM has remained committed to its core values of secularism, protection of religious minorities, and advocacy for a ban on liquor. The party's evolution from a movement to a political force signifies a shift in Mizoram's political dynamics and represents the changing aspirations of its people.

**Objective of the study**

The first objective is to look into the sociopolitical circumstances surrounding ZPM's founding and examine how it became a viable political alternative to Mizoram's well-known parties, like the Indian National Congress and the Mizo National Front. Second objective is to evaluate ZPM's governance since winning the Mizoram Legislative Assembly elections in 2023, especially with regard to policy implementation, providing public services, and adhering to its fundamental principles of secularism and the protection of religious minorities

**Scope and Methodology**

Scope: The study aims to provide a comprehensive analysis of ZPM's political journey, its impact on Mizoram's governance, and its implications for regional politics in Northeast India. It will cover the party's formation, ideological stance, electoral strategy, governance model, and public perception. The study will also explore ZPM's role in challenging the traditional two-party system and its contribution to the evolving political consciousness in Mizoram.

Methodology:

- Qualitative and Quantitative research, which will be conducted using a literature review and case studies.
- A thorough review of existing literature, including academic journals, news articles, and party publications, will be conducted to gather secondary data on ZPM's history, policies, and political significance.

**Literature review**

The Zoram People's Movement has garnered significant attention in the political discourse of Mizoram and Northeast India. This literature review synthesizes the existing body of work on ZPM, focusing on its formation, political ideology, and impact on regional politics.

Formation and Ideological Stance The ZPM was established as a coalition of six regional parties, aiming

to address various issues in Mizoram. Founded by Lalduhoma, a former IPS officer, MLA, and ex-Member of Parliament, the party sought to provide a political alternative to the Mizo National Front (MNF) and the Indian National Congress (INC). The ZPM's formation was rooted in a desire for social change and community welfare, which later transitioned into a political movement (Times of India). Electoral Performance and Governance In the 2018 Mizoram Legislative Assembly elections, ZPM made its electoral debut, securing victory in 8 out of 40 seats. The party's platform included the reinstatement of a liquor ban, reflecting its conservative Christian values. By the 2023 elections, ZPM had consolidated its position, winning 27 out of 40 seats and forming the government under Lalduhoma's leadership. This victory marked a significant shift in Mizoram's political landscape, with ZPM's governance focusing on secularism and the protection of religious minorities (Times of India).

Impact on Regional Politics ZPM's success is indicative of a broader revitalization of regional politics in Northeast India. The party's victory underscores the importance of regional entities in spearheading movements that resonate with local aspirations and challenges. ZPM's approach to governance and policy-making has implications for the political dynamics of the region and offers insights into the evolving nature of Indian federalism and regional autonomy (The Statesman).

The Zoram People's Movement (ZPM) emerged as a significant political force in Mizoram, challenging the established dominance of the Indian National Congress (INC) and the Mizo National Front (MNF). The sociopolitical circumstances that led to the founding of ZPM and its rise as a viable alternative can be analyzed through several key factors:

**Sociopolitical Discontent:** ZPM capitalized on the growing discontent among the populace with the traditional political parties. The INC and MNF had long dominated Mizoram's political scene, but their inability to address certain local issues and allegations of corruption led to public disillusionment. ZPM positioned itself as a party that could bring about a "new, corruption-free governance," which resonated with the voters (Scroll.in)

**Coalition Formation:** The Mizoram People's Conference, Zoram Nationalist Party, Zoram Exodus Movement, Zoram Decentralization Front, Zoram Reformation Front, and Zoram People's Party were among the six regional groups that first formed the alliance that would later become ZPM. This coalition was formed to provide a cohesive front against the established parties and to address the myriad concerns that the people of Mizoram are facing. The establishment of ZPM as a political alternative was largely facilitated by the alliance's combined strength and common vision for Mizoram's future.

**Positions on Policy:** ZPM's positions on policy, especially its support for the reinstatement of the alcohol prohibition, connected well with Mizoram's conservative Christian voters. This regulation ran counter to the MNF's viewpoint, which had abolished the alcohol ban for those under the age of eighteen in 2014. ZPM's alignment with the values of the majority Christian population in Mizoram was a significant factor in its political ascent.

**Electoral Strategy:** ZPM backed independent candidates that ran on the same platform, flag, and policies in the 2018 Mizoram Legislative Assembly elections, and they were successful in securing 8 seats. ZPM had solidified its dominance by the 2023 elections, taking 27 of the 40 seats and becoming the government. The party's successful campaigning and calculated electoral preparation were key factors in its victory.

**Leadership:** Lalduhoma, a former member of parliament, IPS officer, and MLA, gave ZPM legitimacy and a clear sense of purpose. His impeccable reputation and background in administration were advantages that helped ZPM become known as a party that could lead effectively.

### Findings of primary research

**Political Transformation:** ZPM has significantly altered the political landscape of Mizoram. Initially formed as an alliance of six regional parties, it has transitioned into a single political entity with a strong focus on secularism and the protection of religious minorities. This transformation has been pivotal in challenging the long-standing dominance of the Indian National Congress (INC) and the Mizo National Front (MNF) in the region.

**Electoral Success:** The party's strategy of supporting independent candidates in the 2018 elections led to winning 8 seats. By the 2023 Mizoram Legislative Assembly elections, ZPM had consolidated its position, winning 27 out of 40 seats and forming the government. This success is attributed to the party's inclusive approach and its alignment with the values of the majority Christian population in Mizoram.

**Governance and Policy Initiatives:** Under the leadership of Lalduhoma, ZPM has focused on boosting the economy with a particular emphasis on agriculture. The party's governance has also been marked by its stance on re-imposing a ban on liquor, reflecting its conservative Christian values and catering to the demands of its electorate.

**Public Perception:** The perception of ZPM among the public has been generally positive, with Lalduhoma's popularity continuing to increase. The party's commitment to recalibrating the political setup in Mizoram to address local issues and provide transparent governance has resonated well with the voters. **Impact on Regional Politics:** ZPM's victory has revitalized regional politics in Northeast India, highlighting the impactful contributions of regional entities. The party's success underscores the importance of regional parties in spearheading movements that resonate with local aspirations and challenges

### Analysis and Interpretation

**Political Significance:** ZPM's emergence as a dominant political force in Mizoram represents a significant shift away from the traditional two-party system dominated by the Mizo National Front (MNF) and the Indian National Congress (INC). The party's victory in the 2023 Mizoram Legislative Assembly elections, where it won 27 out of 40 seats, indicates a strong public mandate for change and a move towards a more inclusive and secular governance model that aligns with the values of the majority Christian population in Mizoram.

**Impact on Mizoram's Governance:** The analysis of ZPM's governance approach since its electoral success reveals a commitment to its core values, such as secularism and the protection of religious minorities. The party's stance on re-imposing a ban on liquor aligns with the conservative Christian values prevalent in the state and reflects its policy-driven approach to addressing social issues.

**Interpretation of Electoral Strategy:** ZPM's strategic electoral planning, which included supporting independent candidates in the 2018 elections and consolidating its position by the 2023 elections, demonstrates an effective campaign strategy. The party's ability to resonate with the electorate's desire for "corruption-free governance" and its inclusive approach contributed to its overwhelming victory.

**Regional Political Dynamics:** The interpretation of ZPM's impact on regional politics suggests that its success is indicative of a broader revitalization of regional politics in Northeast India. ZPM's victory underscores the importance of regional entities in spearheading movements that resonate with local aspirations and challenges, highlighting the evolving nature of Indian federalism and regional autonomy.

**Sociopolitical Transformation:** The sociopolitical transformation brought about by ZPM's rise challenges the established ethnic identity politics that have long influenced Mizoram's political

landscape. The party's focus on governance and development issues over ethnic identity suggests a changing political narrative in the state.

### Conclusion

The Zoram People's Movement (ZPM) has marked a new chapter in the political narrative of Mizoram, signifying a departure from the entrenched two-party system. The party's decisive victory in the 2023 Mizoram Assembly elections, where it secured 27 out of 40 seats, is a testament to the evolving political consciousness in the state. This triumph is not just about the number of seats won but represents a hopeful future, driven by progressive policies and inclusive governance.

ZPM's success reflects the electorate's desire for a transparent, accountable, and development-oriented government. The party's commitment to secularism, protection of religious minorities, and conservative Christian values aligns with the aspirations of Mizoram's populace. Moreover, ZPM's governance model, focusing on sustainable development and social empowerment, promises to address the unique challenges faced by the state.

As ZPM takes the reins of Mizoram's governance, it stands poised to implement its vision for the state's growth in various sectors. The party's approach to empowering local communities, prioritizing environmental conservation, and preserving Mizoram's rich cultural heritage sets a precedent for innovative governance and inclusive development.

In conclusion, the Zoram People's Movement's emergence as a formidable political entity in Mizoram is indicative of a broader trend towards regional parties playing a pivotal role in shaping India's democratic processes. It underscores the dynamic nature of electoral politics and the potential for regional movements to transform into significant political forces, capable of driving change and fostering a more equitable society.

### Suggestions

Based on the analysis of the Zoram People's Movement (ZPM) and its current political context in Mizoram, here are some suggestions for the party to consider:

**Strengthen Grassroots Engagement:** ZPM should continue to engage with the local communities at the grassroots level. This includes organizing town hall meetings, community discussions, and feedback sessions to understand the needs and concerns of the people. Such engagement can help the party stay connected with its voter base and make informed policy decisions.

**Focus on Youth and Women Empowerment:** With a significant youth population in Mizoram, ZPM could benefit from policies that empower young people through education, employment opportunities, and entrepreneurship programs. Similarly, empowering women by ensuring their representation in party leadership and decision-making processes can lead to a more inclusive political environment.

**Transparent Governance:** As ZPM has positioned itself as a party of clean governance, it is crucial to maintain transparency in its operations and decision-making processes. Implementing e-governance initiatives and public disclosure of party finances can enhance credibility and public trust.

**Policy Innovation:** ZPM should focus on innovative policies that address the unique challenges of Mizoram, such as sustainable development, environmental conservation, and cultural preservation. Collaborating with think tanks and policy experts can help in formulating effective strategies.

**Political Alliances:** Building strategic alliances with other regional and national parties can strengthen ZPM's

position in the broader political landscape. Such alliances can also be beneficial in advocating for Mizoram's interests at the national level.

**Communication Strategy:** Developing a robust communication strategy that leverages social media and local media outlets can help in disseminating the party's message and policies effectively. This will also aid in countering misinformation and engaging with the youth demographic.

**Continuous Political Education:** Investing in political education for party members and the public can help in building a more informed electorate. Workshops, seminars, and educational campaigns on democratic values and civic responsibilities can contribute to a more engaged citizenry.

**Addressing Social Issues:** ZPM should continue to address pressing social issues such as healthcare, education, and infrastructure development. Tailoring policies to meet the specific needs of Mizoram's diverse communities can lead to more equitable development.

By considering these suggestions, the Zoram People's Movement can consolidate its position as a leading political force in Mizoram and continue to make significant contributions to the state's development and governance.

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