

## Urban Governance in Aizawl: Challenges before Urban Local Bodies towards Development

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### Abstract

*Majority of the world's population, i.e. 54 per cent now lives in the urban area today and the trend continues to increase. Urbanization will concentrate more in developing countries. So far as the situation in the Indian state of Mizoram is concerned, due to various pull factors, such as the outbreak of insurgency and the consequent grouping of villages which has shattered the village economy, people started settling in Aizawl, the capital city. Therefore, it is emerging as a very busy and congested urban centre despite being located in a hilly area. In the place of only the traditional local government institutions, i.e. Village Councils which now have been replaced by Local Councils, there is also a development oriented Constitutional urban local body known as Aizawl Municipal Corporation (AMC) ready to handle the various issues and challenges of urban governance. The paper studies the status of urban governance since the inception of urban local body, assessing the challenges on the way along with the effectiveness of this body.*

**Keywords:** urban area, issues and challenges, urban local body, governance

### Introduction

The global urban population has predominantly become more urban than rural. Cities are important drivers of development and poverty reduction. It draws large numbers of people due to its attractive locations of facilities and infrastructure. In 2015, 54 per cent of the world's population lives in urban areas and the proportion is expected to increase to 66 per cent by 2050. The largest growth of urban area will take place in India, China and Nigeria (UN, 2014).

According to Census 2011, for the first time in India the absolute increase in population is more in urban areas than the rural areas. India's urban population is 37.7 crore to that of the rural areas 83.3 crore. In terms of percentage, rural-urban distribution in India is 68.84 per cent and 31.16 per cent respectively.

Aizawl was established on 25<sup>th</sup> February 1890 and originally it was a military fortified place. Infrastructures such as Tlawng river water way, Cart road

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between Sairang and Aizawl and Aijal bazaar which were instrumental in the growth of Aizawl town. When the British left India, Mizo District Council (MDC) was formed in 1952, Aizawl became the capital of MDC and since then, new residential areas have sprung up and it has been growing haphazardly without any control. There were more avenues for employment, both in private and public sector, which has resulted in pull factor and more and more people migrated to Aizawl.

The other factor in a population boom in Aizawl is the insurgency and its aftermath, the grouping of villages and its consequences. Mizo National Front resorted to violence on the midnight of the 28<sup>th</sup> February, 1966 and they proclaimed independence afterwards. The Indian Army had moved into the Mizo Hills on the 5<sup>th</sup> March, 1966. The fight between the two parties ensued and as a consequence, grouping of villages was undertaken by the Indian government as a means to check the movements of the underground personnel as food, accommodation, money or other facilities

are provided by the people. The other reason cited by the government is economic. Due to the difficult terrain, economic benefits and modern amenities couldn't reach every corner of the district as small villages are scattered over distant and on the hilltops. To accelerate economic development, larger villages were created mainly on the road between Vairengte and south of Lunglei with better regular road communication, outlet for agricultural products with an aim of raising the standard of living and to enjoy a better life (Agnihotri, 2010). Before the introduction of the scheme, there were 764 villages out of which 516 villages were evacuated and regrouped in 110 grouping centres while 138 villages were excluded. Regrouping failed to achieve its purpose and eventually destroyed the traditional jhum cultivation system without providing alternative means of livelihood thereby leading to near-famine situation. This has impacted large-scale migration to urban areas, especially during 1970–2000. The percentage of urban population in 1962 was 5.36 per cent, which jumped to 46.09 percent in 1991 to 49.5 percent in 2001(Nunthara,2010).

**Table 1 Decadal Population Growth of Aizawl**

Census Year	Population	Decadal Change	Growth Rate (%)
1971	38,260		
1981	74,493	36,233	94%
1991	1,55,240	80,747	108%
2001	2,28,280	73,040	47%
2011	2,93,416	63,542	28.53%

**Source:** *Census of India Reports of 1971, 1981, 1991, 2001 & 2011*

Therefore, the level of Aizawl decadal population growth rate has been increasing from 108 per cent between 1981-91 to 147 per cent between 1991-2000, however, a decline was witnessed between 2001-2011, at a relatively low 28.53 per cent. The Aizawl City population according to 2011 Census was 2,93,416 lakhs, it constitutes 26.74 per cent of the Mizoram total population.

### **Transition from traditional to modern urban government**

Aizawl was technically a cluster of villages as the tradition based village governing institution known as the Village Council administered the issues of local administration. Village Councils were constituted in every locality of Aizawl. Geographically, it was divided into 63 Village Councils and these councils exercises authority based on Mizo customs and traditions, and they were entrusted with multi-functions as per multitudes of acts and regulations passed by the government from time to time. A different line departments of the Government of Mizoram deliver urban services:- water supply by Public Health Engineering Department, distribution of power by Power & Electricity Department, urban poverty alleviation by Urban Development and Poverty Alleviation Department, urban forestry by Environment and Forest Department, roads and bridges by Public Works Department, Fire Services by Home Department, promotion of cultural, educational and aesthetic aspects by

Education Department, cattle pounds, prevention of cruelty to animals by Veterinary Department, etc. Authority was seldom exercised in the same manner across different fields. In fact, Village Council was not a development body and it was an administrative agency at the local level performing line agency functions for the implementation of various policies of the different government departments. This resulted into the complexities of functions and performance and confusion over responsibilities. A wide gap between Village Council and State Government was a big problem.

The necessity of strengthening and decentralizing the local body was felt throughout a very long period. In 2008, a constitutionally based urban local body known as Municipal Council was formed as per Article 243 of the Indian Constitution. The formation of this body was necessitated by the reform measures included in the checklist of Jawaharlal Nehru National Urban Renewal Scheme (JNNURM). It is a decentralized democratically elected body armed with development functions and equipped with grants by the Central Finance Commission (CFC). It provides attractive packages such as Gram Sabha, three tier bodies, district planning committee, State Finance Commission, reservation of seats for backward community and women.

### **Municipal Council**

The new urban local self-government is expected to function on a broad dimension in terms of a realisation

of ever-expanding range of benefits and expectations of service delivery for the urban people. So far only few functions specified in the 12<sup>th</sup> schedule of the Indian constitution have been transferred to AMC, such as, regulation of land use and construction of buildings, urban planning, including town planning, public health, sanitation, conservancy and solid waste management, burial and burial grounds, cremations and cremation grounds, public amenities, regulation of slaughter houses and collection of property tax. Aizawl Municipal Council's main mission and vision is to provide the basic amenities to the general public of Aizawl City. Some of these are:

- 1) To provide basic civic amenities in the jurisdiction of Aizawl Municipality
- 2) To collect Tax and Non- Tax revenues
- 3) Issue of Trade/Food Licenses
- 4) Maintenance of Public Places likes Parks / Gardens, etc.
- 5) To provide Citizen Centric (Govt. to Citizen) services, and E-Governance applications
- 6) Generation of employment

In order to have good and better urban governance, the AMC is obliged to fulfill its vision statement. A crucial question here is that to what extent the AMC is equipped with the necessary expertise, financial means and mandates to carry out its task effectively; in terms of better urban governance, equity,

participation, accountability, efficient and effective administration as these are a hot topic of discussion for a very long time relating to urban good governance. However, it appears that the effectiveness of the new institution AMC is questionable.

### **Issues and Challenges faced by the ULB**

The urban local body has gone through an incipient stage with numerous challenges in the offing some of which are highlighted as under:

#### **Solid Waste Management System**

SWM through a modified public-private partnership have been practised in Aizawl since September, 2010 to 2017 when AMC procured vehicles through State Investment Programme Management and Implementation Unit (SIPMIU) for garbage collections from different parts of Aizawl to the Tuirial dumping place. Eighty three Local Councils were entrusted to collect and transport municipal solid waste from their jurisdiction to Aizawl Municipal Solid Waste Management Centre, Tuirial about 20 kms from the city. According to the SIPMIU, waste generated in Aizawl per day is 165.39 MT out of which 62.85 MT is bio-degradable, 64.50 MT is recyclable, which consists mostly of plastic, metals and paper products and the remaining 38.04 MT consists of inert ash and debris. The Municipal Solid Waste generated per capita per day is 0.476 kg. Expenditure per month is 38.02 lakhs out of which AMC contributed 80 per cent and public

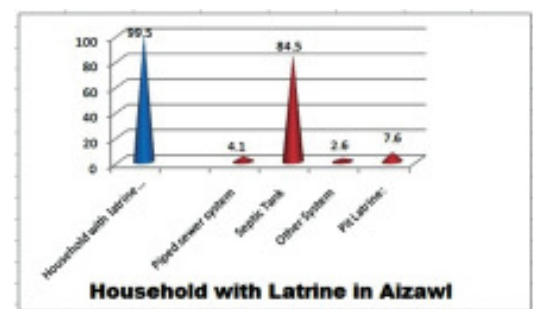
contribution consisted 20 per cent (SWM Cell Aizawl:2016). During a month, 1554 trips of Medium Motor Vehicle (MMV), 807 trips of Light Motor Vehicle (LMV) carry waste to the site.

A pilot experiment was conducted on segregation of waste into wet and dry bin at the household level in the selected five local councils of Aizawl, i.e. Laipuitlang, Nursery Veng, College Veng, Chawnpui and Kanan localities for a

duration of three months in the year 2014. The project was enforced to comply with the Municipal Solid Waste (Management and Handling) Rules, 2000. The wet wastes were composted in an M/s Vermizo Society, Lengpui and was used for manufacturing fertilizer; dry wastes were dumped on the Tuirial Dumping ground and recyclable wastes, viz. Paper, polythene, glass, plastic bottles, etc. were sold to the customers and the remains were put in a landfill (Dorema:2016).

**Figure :1 Household having Latrine in Aizawl**

Out of the 60,432 families living in Aizawl, according to 2011 census, the number of households having latrine facility is 99.5, which is 60130 families out of which 2465 families having piped sewer system, 50810 families having septic tank and 1563 families with other system, 4570 families used pit latrine system.



Source: Field Study, Aizawl

Number of households not having latrine are 0.5 percent and out of which public latrine is used by 0.2 per cent and open defecation per cent is 0.3 which makes a total of 18 households.

**Figure:2 People's Participation in Solid Waste Management:**

There are 83 local councils in Aizawl and survey was conducted in 38 local councils consisting of 36,039 households. Out of this, 28,988 households participated in solid waste collection through public-private partnership(PPP) mode and, 6030 families didn't participate in the solid waste. Money is collected from each and every household, which is approximately Rs. 30/-. Some localities collect more while others collect lesser amounts



Source: Field Study, Aizawl



depending on the location. The AMC contributed 80 per cent and 20 per cent was borne by the people. From the field study, most of the households consisting 80.44 % contributed money for dumping waste, but they actually do not dump waste in the collection point because houses are located in the sideslope/step area far off from the road. The worst practice is that stream and drainage are used as dumping place which is detrimental to the urban ecosystem. 16.74 per cent of the households preferred not to participate in the PPP mode.

The existing solid waste management practice is unscientific, i.e. without segregation in its collection and disposal, which is merely an open dumping on the roadside between Zemabawk and Tuirial though the main dumping centre is near Tuirial which has been used since 1997. There is no waste segregation and burning of waste is practised polluting the environment. Many people still prefer to dump wastes in the neighbouring areas, such as in the stream and drainage, (Lalchhuanawma, 2017). Solid Waste is being transported in open vehicles. Since the vehicles aren't covered, light weight waste may be flown off the vehicles and littered on the roads. The loading and unloading of waste is being done manually and sanitation workers involved in this activity do not use any Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) (SIPMIU Aizawl:2015).

Licensing Regulation: The Aizawl Municipal Council Licensing Regulation 2012 have been enacted and amended in

2013. It has been implemented with effect from January 6, 2014. By this act, the existing shops/business establishments have to acquire license from AMC within six months from the date of its effective. New shops have to get license beforehand. Initially, the Mizoram Merchants Association (MIMA) vehemently opposed the provisions of the license on the ground that there is a possibility of encroachment by the non-Mizo traders to possess trade license in Mizoram. They insisted to make it compulsory for anyone applying for trade license - a Mizoram state residential certificate or four years renewal of Inner Line Permit which will regulate the outsiders from doing free trade and to protect the sons of soil. MIMA further reiterated that the documents required for applying trade license such as residential certificate and others in the 1st Amendment Act 2013, can be easily acquired by any Mizo and non-Mizos; threatening the protection and security of the sons of soil from social and economic assimilation by the plain non-tribal and the claim made by AMC that the entry of non-Mizo traders can be stopped by using Inner Line Permit is baseless. The neighbouring states such as Cachar, Tripuri, Khasi, Assamese and Manipuri have been economically assimilated by the non-tribals and the AMC's new regulation is also gearing the Mizos towards the same pathetic condition as pointed out by MIMA.

Licensing regulation has also met passive resistance not only from MIMA but also from Central Young Mizo Association (CYMA), Mizoram Upa

Pawl (MUP), Mizo Hmeichhe Insuihkhawm Pawl (MHIP) and Mizo Zirlai Pawl (MZP). These organizations have declared their unwillingness against the implementation of the said regulation that it isn't safe for the Mizos. CM Zakhuma, the AMC chairman has said that when the regulation was introduced, they had kept in mind that the regulation can be amended as and when necessary. The main objective of the regulation is to ensure the business establishment/shop should not be located in the place where it is not appropriate. License holder can start their establishment only in the allocated area and the local council leaders may object the place of establishment if it is found to be in an inconvenient place, obstructing public spaces. License provides guidelines on how to manage the solid waste in public places-shop, clinic, school, hostel and hospital, insisting on maintaining clean environment. The Mizo National Front-Mizoram People's Conference alliance also supported the stand by issuing a statement saying that the regulation should be amended taking in view the opinion of the NGOs and the merchant association.

The AMC Board of Councillors in its meeting held on 17th January 2014 had decided to incorporate the demands made by the NGOs, political parties and trade association in the licensing regulations and go ahead with it. The changes made in the regulation are:-

1. Regulation 2(m) definition of licence - In place of 'Licence means licence issued by the Aizawl Municipal Council for the purpose of trade' the following is inserted,

'Licence means licence to use a particular place or location for the purpose of doing business within AMC area'.

2. Regulation 4(f) required documents for the licence applicants, the following clause has been added 'Trade licence granted by the erstwhile Mizo District Council for non-indigenous persons'.

The rationale behind the changes is that License Regulation is not a trade license and the AMC is not the authority to grant trade license. The AMC has claimed that the standpoint of the NGOs and political parties are quite similar with that of the Aizawl Municipal Council, they don't want the non-Mizos to have trade license in Aizawl. They want to insist permanent residential certificate in place of residential certificate.

Finance: Central Finance Commission (CFC) Grant for the urban area has been implemented through the Local Administration Department (2005-07), Urban Development & Poverty Alleviation Dept. (2008-2010) and Aizawl Municipal Council (2010-till date). It is found that there are no formula/criteria for distribution of CFC grants to the local councils in the urban area, while it is allocated to the rural local bodies, i.e. Village Council based on the population and number of households. In the urban area where ULB is set up as per 74th CAA 1992, FC Grants are implemented on need basis by the nodal agencies, the Ward Councillors execute and manage distribution of fund. This shows the element of politicization of FC Grants in

the urban area overlapping the importance of the grassroot level elected bodies.

Inter - governmental fiscal transfer through 13th Central Finance Commission Grant has come under the tight control of the State Government. Late released of grants by the State Government to AMC has posed a problem. According to the Report of the Comptroller and Auditor General on State Finances- 2012, release of FC Grants by UD & PA to AMC is usually delayed ranging from 5 to 125 days from the stipulated date of transfer which are in contravention to the Central Government's order (CAG Report, 2012).

The first instalment of the FC Grant 2011 -12 amounting to Rs. 548 lakhs was

spent for development works without calling tender as it was going to be late for submission of utilization certificate to procure second instalment. This was in contravention of the usual practices as per the legal provision. The 13th FC Grants to local bodies was allocated on two components, such as Basic Grant and Performance Grant. State Governments were eligible for the general performance grant if they comply with the prescribed conditions laid down by the Commission. Mizoram was among the nine States out of 29 in India which was found eligible for getting the performance grant and it has received Rs. 4.66 crore during 2014-15 (PTI, 2015).

**Status of Mizoram on FC:XIII Eligible Criteria to access Performance Grant**

Sl. No.	Prescribed Eligible Criteria	Status of State Government
1	Budget documents for local bodies (separately for PRIs and ULBs) in State Government Budget.	Yes, there is separate budget documents for AMC
2	Audit system for all Local Bodies.	Technical Guidance and Supervision over the audit of all the local bodies by the C &AG (that is the Accountant General (Audit) of Mizoram)
3	Independent Local Body Ombudsmen.	The Mizoram (Establishment of Independent Local Body) Ombudsman Act, 2011
4	Transfer of funds electronically within 5 days of the receipt of funds from Central Government.	Yes
5	Having an act prescribing qualifications of persons eligible for appointment as members of SFC in consistent with Article 243 I (2) of the Constitution.	The Mizoram Finance Commission Act, 2010



Sl. No.	Prescribed Eligible Criteria	Status of State Government
6	All local bodies should be enabled to collect Property Tax.	Yes
7	State level Property Tax Board.	Yes
8	To put in place Service standards for four sectors Water Supply, Sewerage, Storm Water Drainage and Solid Waste Management.	Yes

Source: Aizawl Municipal Corporation, 2015

FC XIII eligible criteria for performance grants have been fulfilled by the urban local body and hence, it has been receiving grants for every year.

**Property Tax:** The AMC has collected Property Tax based on The Mizoram Municipalities (Property Management) Rules, 2014 since September 2014. Initially, the payment system of Property Tax in Aizawl had caused a big problem for the citizen, as payment outlet wasn't provided in the city close to the people. Citizens had to go to Thuampui, located in the northern part of Aizawl which is far off from the heart of the city. The task of enumeration and calculation of the value of the house was outsourced to Institutional Development Consultancy Firm (IDCF) based on 11 parameters-availability of water supply, drainage, street lighting, streets and roads, market/shopping centre, primary and secondary education, higher education, commercial institutions, medical institution, factory and industry, overall standard of living. According to IDCF, there are 48,344 houses in Aizawl at the time of survey which was 2013-14. Property Tax is

collected based on the location and value of the house and Aizawl is divided into eight zones A, B, C, D, E, F, G and H.

**Haphazard Building Construction:**

Construction of buildings in violation of all planning norms and regulations still continues today. This is one of the biggest challenges faced by AMC and it is likely that it will continue to be a serious challenge in the future development of Aizawl. Aizawl Municipal Council Building Regulations, 2012 has been applicable to all the newly erected, dismantled, repaired, demolished and alteration of the building. The observation with regard to the implementation of the building regulation is that, the regulation cannot be implemented in full legality due to certain difficulties- without seeking permission from the AMC many buildings have been constructed; a great number of building construction violates regulations, and half-hearted enforcement of building regulations by the authority are some of the problems at present. In 2013-14 actions have been taken by the Technical Committee on Safety of Buildings, AMC to punish the defaulters, to such length as

demolition of buildings and stopping of electricity and water supply.

**Political Accountability:** There was frequent change of political power in the ULB during the initial years of its formation. This leads to deterioration of people's confidence on the ULB which will hamper effective service delivery through good urban governance.

### Conclusion

Urban government today no longer holds the monopoly of shaping and implementing policies for the urban citizens since there is a shared network among the different stakeholders. While studying the reality of the urban governance in Aizawl, the journey taken by the urban local body is not very smooth for the last couple of years. There have been clashes of interest, finance impropriety on the part of the state government, administrative inconvenience,

political instability for some years, etc. In many aspects the municipal/local authorities in Aizawl have been providing quality and standard services conforming to the application of good urban governance. The implementation of the 74<sup>th</sup> Constitution Amendment Act has positive as well as negative results.

Sound urban governance is believed to be the panacea for the ills associated with the several problems faced by the urban area. At present, it is the only municipal council existing in Mizoram, and other municipalities may be established in the near future in different notified towns of Mizoram. The findings can be useful for the practitioners as well as the policymakers' in managing future municipalities. Besides, it would also be helpful to diagnose the problems faced by the similar urban area situated in the hilly areas of other parts of India.

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