

Urbanisation by the Border: Reshaping the frontier space in Northeast India

Background

Over the last few years Northeast India has witnessed an emphasis on developing the infrastructure through widening roads, expanding air connectivity, extending railway networks, opening new and reactivating old dormant trade routes, and facilitating border trade and transit points. The infrastructural and logistical expansion has therefore infused a new lease of life into the towns and cities of the region, which were mostly serving as administrative centres. In 2015, 7 cities from the region, namely- Guwahati, Imphal, Agartala, Pasighat, Aizwal, Kohima and Shillong were among the 'smart city' nominees. Moreh in Manipur, situated on the Indo-Myanmar border was declared a 'Free Trade Zone' by the Government of India in 1995 and is now a township. Manipur government has taken the initiative to build a market complex in Moreh with a budget of Rs. 22 crores. The number of items to be traded between India and Myanmar has increased from 40 to 62 in November 2012. A report titled "Emerging North East India" published by FICCI proposes similar approaches in Dawki, Karimganj, Akhaura, Mankachar, and few other towns along with similar initiatives on the other side of the border in Bangladesh. Likewise, the Land Custom Station (LCS) in Akhaura near Agartala town is functional now with the facilities of passenger terminal, warehouse, and entry gate.

Urban and trading centres of the region in a way exhibit the expanding niche of capital in the Northeast frontier; however it doesn't discount the multiple fault lines in the region which inhibits the linear aggression of capital. It is necessary to take into account the political situation of the region, often entangled with the issues of identity of ethnicity, in order to understand or speculate how the region would react with more infusion of capital, labour and logistics. Pregnant with 'durable disorders', Northeast represents a volatile space wherein the Lefebvrian suggestion of understating space could be useful – "Method for approaching spatial problems cannot consist of one formal method, logical or logistical, it must be a dialectical method that analyzes the contradictions in society and social practice".

Political Realities and Urban Formation in Northeast India

To those who are aware of India's territorial ambit and practices of the Indian state, the Northeast region evokes an image of a frontier which is filled with diverse ecology, communities and customs. The region seemingly maintains a status quo in terms of existence despite India's increasing assertion in the region in recent decades through a simultaneous usage of military might and logistical expansion. The region has poised multiple challenges of governance as un-reconciled sovereignty of India by numerous ethnic groups has led violent secessionist movements rendering peace uncertain. Much of the rebellion has been quelled by the Indian state through means of military

operation, negotiations and the emerging 'social governance'.¹ Recent scholarships on the region have pointed out, and rightly so, that the question of sovereignty has shifted to question of governance through actors such as women who engage actively in peace-making and post-conflict governance.² One of the prominent governance approaches has been to shift from security-centricity to trade centricity under the pretext of 'Look and Act East Policy' which aims to overcome the multiple fault lines in the region by integrating it with the broader network of trade, communication and logistics.³ Prima facie this newfound policy approach since the 1990s is intended for the regional development, keeping the increasing clout of China in South Asian geopolitics in the retrospect it becomes essential for India to consolidate its position in Northeast India which would bridge the spaces between mainland India and other Southeast Asian nations, alternate to the maritime trade routes. The sense of urgency is necessitated by the decades of reluctance of the Indian state in the post-colonial period to enter into bilateral ties with its neighbours, which changed to a certain extent in the post reform period commencing from the early 1990s.⁴

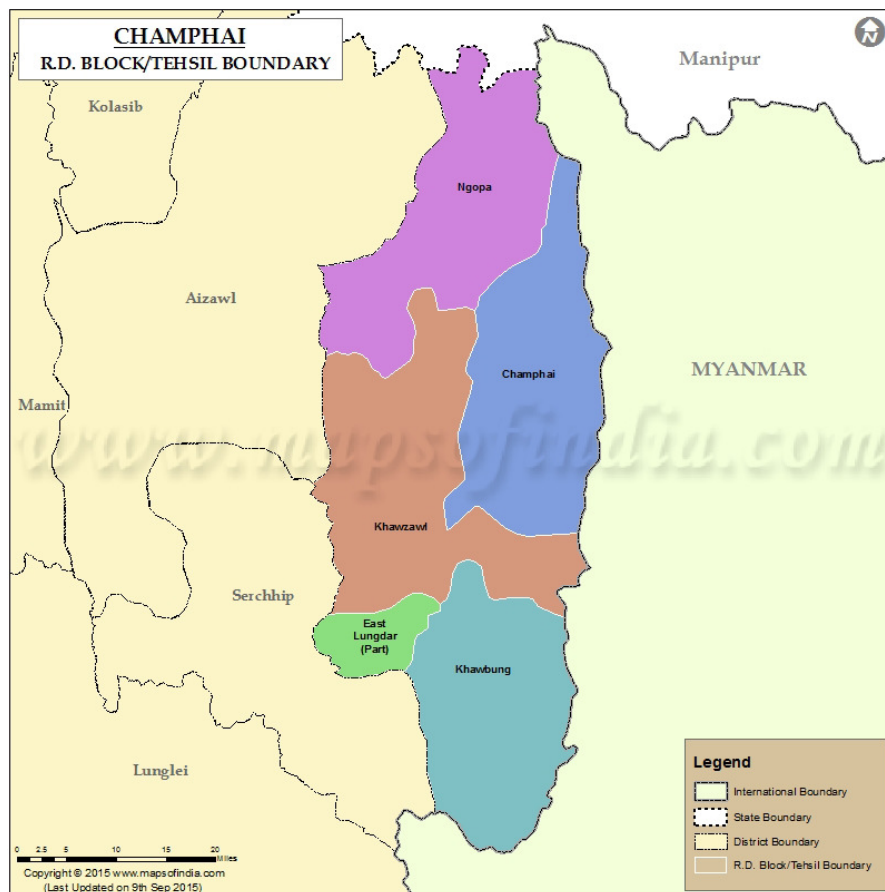
The requirements of a participatory and successful foreign policy will require an adroit navigation through political realities of the region. The common thread of conflict binds the states of Northeast India with most of the states having a rebel militant outfit; Manipur and Nagaland have been the most troubled states in recent times which witnessed a series of blockade and violence as a reaction against decisions of their respective governments.⁵ Moreh in Manipur is the major border town along the Indo-Myanmar border which has received considerable academic attention⁶, the trade route however has been fraught with disruption emerging out of multiple level of contestation between insurgent groups along the National Highway 39. Blockade of road in the Naga dominated Northern Manipur also affects the cross border trade in Moreh and business across Manipur. The most recent economic blockade on National Highway 37 and National Highway 2 which passes through the Naga inhabited areas, continued from 1 November 2016 to 19 March 2017, registering protest against creation of new districts in Manipur.⁷

Due to the absence of perpetual peace in Manipur, there has been a recent shift towards Mizoram for facilitating the cross border connectivity and trade. Mizoram has been comparatively a peaceful state since signing of the 'Mizo Accord' in 1986. India and Myanmar entered into a Framework Agreement on Kaladan Multi-Modal Transit Transport Project which aims to link Kolkata port to Lawngtlai in Mizoram through Sittwe and Paletwa in Myanmar.⁸ The Land Custom Station (LCS) was setup in Zokawthar⁹ in March 2015. In recent years there has been a gradual rise in the percentage of cross border trade between Mizoram and Myanmar.¹⁰ These factors collectively led to the choice of fieldwork site towards the town of Champhai in Mizoram which is located within 28 km of the Zokawthar border and 192 km from Aizawl, capital of Mizoram.

Research on the small urban centres, by moving beyond 'metrocentricity' has been a major debate around the academic circles in recent times. Scholars have reflected how

the majority of the urban researches have tended to restrict themselves to the major metropolises in the world and observed that “global research is paradoxically parochial in failing to extend beyond world city-financial enclave spaces.”¹¹ Duncan McDuer’s work on Imphal (capital of Manipur state), showcases how to navigate the transformation of small urban spaces of Northeast India. McDuer highlights how the urban spaces of the Northeast frontier is reacting in terms of capital flows, conflict economy and migration.¹² Atig Ghosh’s work on Siliguri as the border city of North Bengal, though not technically situated in Northeast India, also shows that the urban transformation in Siliguri is majorly influenced by the changing nature of capital and emerging prospects of connectivity.¹³ By investigating the urban formation of Champhai town, the paper makes an attempt to showcase how the concepts and imaginations one associates with the city as a global centre, such as flows, transactions, governing institutions and interactions, resurface in a frontier space with its own unique specificities and spatio-ethnic rhythm. Until recently frontier has been considered to be an area considerably out of the reach of the state with its own dynamics of resistance, internalization and innovation; recent global wide endeavours of cross border connectivity has brought the frontier areas under the logistical lens and which in turn has attested the status of ‘logistical hubs/towns’ to the border settlement and towns.¹⁴

Locating Champhai, Narrating Champhai



Champhai district sub-divided into Rural Development Blocks.

Source – Champhai Tehsil Map, <http://www.mapsofindia.com/maps/mizoram/tehsil/champhai.html> (accessed on 15 May 2017).

Prior to venturing into the contemporary scheme of things in Champhai, let's take cognizance of Champhai's history and Mizoram's urbanization pattern. Champhai started functioning as a district on 12 December, 1997 with an area of 3185.53 square kms, before which it was a part of Aizawl district. It is located in the northeast corner of Mizoram, bounded by Manipur in the north and Myanmar in the east and south. Champhai is divided into three sub-divisions - Champhai, Ngopa and Khawzawl. The economy of the district is mainly based on agriculture and allied activities. The district is predominantly inhabited by the Mizo community. As per the census of the 2011, there are 1,25,370 people living in the district, density of population is 39 persons per square kilometer with a sex ratio of 981:1000. Literacy rate stands at 93.51%.¹⁵ Champhai town is the administrative head quarters of the district. According to the census of 2011, the population of Champhai stands at 32,734, rendering it as the third most populous town in Mizoram after Aizawl and Lunglei.¹⁶ Champhai was one of the major centres of uprising during the Mizo Nationalist Movement. The army entered Champhai on 14 March 1966.¹⁷ As a part of the anti-movement drive, the grouping of

villages was carried out in Mizoram, what was then known as Lushai Hill district of Assam. The secondary category of grouping took place along 5 sectors of population, Seling-Champhai road being one of them, in August 1969 under the provision of Assam Maintenance of Public Order Act, 1953.¹⁸

The grouping of villages undertaken to discipline the countryside of Mizoram has influenced the consolidation of the urban centres in Mizoram which belies the usual trend of population movement elsewhere.¹⁹ Mizoram doesn't possess any major industrial endeavor²⁰ and the cities neither perform any major role of transit space facilitating movement of people and goods; despite which, with a share of 51.02% urban population, Mizoram has the highest proportion of urban population among all the states in India. Census data suggests that the major leap in the urban population in Mizoram took place between 1971 and 1981, the timeframe wherein the village regrouping was taking place. In the period 1971-1981, Mizoram's total population increased by 46.8%, while the urban population expanded by 225%. Such population dynamics was accompanied by a decline in the share of agriculture workers among the total workforce (83.5% in 1971 to 72.1% in 1981 to 55.76% in 2011).²¹

The towns and cities of Northeast India received a new impetus to expand and consolidate its role as an urban centre due to India's Look East and Act East Policy. The region is likely to serve as a rear from where supplies would be sent forward or received, till the extent permissible by the limit of capital eastwards.²² Therefore in the post-grouping period, the towns of Mizoram find another scope to expand through the realms of logistics, transit and trade. By virtue of being the capital of Mizoram Aizawl already hosts most of the state's urban population and has witnessed proliferation of the leisure and housing industries in the recent period. While geographically Champhai is situated in the eastern periphery of Mizoram, the importance of formalized cross-border trade has rendered a centrality to the fact how Champhai is reacting in the interface of border trade and society.

Prior to transformation to its present stature as a town, the radius of Champhai was limited to three locality on hilltop – Zamadarveng, Kawrawt and Vengklang.²³ Notably the settlement pattern in this region commences at a high altitude as it's a signifying characteristics of the communities under the broader identity of Zo²⁴, who choose high altitudes as habitat for health and security reasons. Champhai town was declared as the district headquarters after Champhai district was formed in 1997. There are three significant plain regions in Mizoram, with Champhai being the largest with a length of merely 11 km and breadth of 5 km.²⁵ While the Aizawl-Champhai road traverses the hilly terrain, it's from Champhai the plain land starts to unfold eastwards towards the direction of Zokawthar. Proximity to the plain land has earned Champhai the tag of 'rice bowl of Mizoram' as the harvest of the settled plain agriculture is greater than that of hilly jhum cultivation. However even within Champhai several households and eateries would have rice procured from Barabazar, Shillong as the price of the locally grown rice is relatively expensive. The inadequate production of local rice which keeps the price high might be attributed to the falling proportion of

agriculture workers against the total workforce. The situation validates Joy Pachau's statement that "the state is dependent on imports and not sufficient even in primary agro-produce".²⁶ Most of the localities in Champhai are concentrated in the hills, while some of the localities have come up in the plains in the outskirts of Champhai. Though Champhai is located 30 km away from Zokawthar border checkpost, mobility across the Indo-Myanmar border, ranging from migration, legitimate trade and illegal smuggling, licit and illicit flows have an inextricable link to the functioning of Champhai as a town. The demography would serve as a crucial departure point in this regard; according to most of the respondents in Champhai around 30% of Champhai's residents are Chins of Myanmar origin.²⁷ The post-colonial nation formation, as elsewhere in the Indian subcontinent, has created a case of 'one ethnicity, two citizenship' with multiple sub-tribes falling under the broad category of Mizo, inhabiting Mizoram in India and Chin state in Myanmar. Political turmoil in Myanmar, especially during the military junta reign, has often pushed the Chins into Mizoram. According to a fact finding report published in 2005, approximately 63,000 Chins reside in Mizoram, with most of them concentrated in Champhai district. The report goes on to elaborate how the Chins in Mizoram are stereotyped as drug peddlers, traffickers and loose moral character. A rape case in 2003, with a Chin as the perpetrator, triggered a widespread call of eviction of the Chins in Mizoram by the influential Young Mizo Association (YMA). Liani Kiangte²⁸, a school teacher in Champhai shared her insights about the Chins in Champhai:

The Mizo society is divided about how to deal with issue of Chins in Mizoram. After all we share the same ethnicity, language and religion. It is quite difficult to distinguish between us by our looks and lingo. However the Mizo language spoken by the Chins are much more text book alike, compared to the Mizo spoken by us, I mean their Mizo is more polished. In Champhai a large number of the Chins have settled down. You can confirm their citizenship and origin during festivals like Christmas, when they flock back to their native place in the Chin state of Myanmar. They even manage to get hold of the *pemlekhba*²⁹ which is required to be submitted to the local unit of YMA prior to settling down in the locality.

The cross-border mobility is a major source of concern for various governmental departments, particularly the security and defense. The next section elaborates about the multiple transactions across the borders and attempts of the Indian state to formalize the same.

Crossing Zokawthar and Avoiding Zokawthar: Border Mobility and Subjectivities

Till January 2004 the Land Custom Station (LCS) was situated in Champhai which was mostly non-functional. The LCS was shifted to Zokawthar after an order was passed by the Commissioner of Customs, Northeast Region, Shillong.³⁰ According to Mizo language Zokhawthar means a new village inhabited by the Zo

people, with *khaw* meaning village and *thar* meaning new.³¹ The Zokawthar-Rih sector was the second Indo-Myanmar Border Trade Point after Moreh. It was formally inaugurated on 30 January 2004, by Myanmar's commerce minister Brig. Gen. Pyi Sone and the acting chief minister of Mizoram Tawnlua. The Composite Building of the Zokawthar LCS was officially inaugurated on 25 March, 2015 by India's Union Minister of State for Commerce and Industry Smt. Nirmala Sitharaman. The construction works in Zokawthar was mainly carried out by the Border Road Organization (BRO). While the functioning of the LCS is an encouraging sign for formalized border trade, notably the entire journey of Smt. Sitharaman from Aizawl to Champhai was undertaken by helicopter. It takes around 10 hours to traverse the road between Aizawl and Champhai due to deplorable road condition at stretches. The 28km stretch between Champhai and Zokawthar at present is more like an open space through which vehicles ply by bearing the uneven path and dust stirs created by the moving wheels.³² The road is now being constricted with the help of World Bank, according to officials in government departments in Champhai.

The border in Zokawthar is marked by the River Tiau, which banks the Rih village on the other side in Myanmar. An iron bridge connects both the banks which can ferry medium weight vehicles. The usage of Tanakha cream on the face by men and women is a common sight in the border area due to the warmer climate when compared with Champhai town. Zokawthar hosts the Customs check post and the Immigration Check Post which is managed by the Mizoram State Police Department. On the other side of the border, Myanmar maintains immigration and trade check posts. According to an Indian government report³³ the immigration check post is guarded by 4 to 5 policemen on a daily basis who are deployed from the Police Station, Zokawthar. The report goes on to elaborate the current status of infrastructure in the LCS in the following manner:

1. Weighbridge – Weighbridge was set up and functional till May 2013. The requisition for repair was put forward to concerned authorities which is yet to be acted upon till date.
2. Warehouse – Bonded warehouse is unavailable. Public warehouse is functioning under the custodian of the Department of Trade and Commerce, Government of Mizoram after proper permission was obtained from the Assistant Commissioner of Customs, Aizawl Division.
3. Banking Arrangement – One State Bank of India branch is functioning at the Composite Land Customs Building since 22 February 2016 as a lone bank branch available in the entire Zokhawthar village. It employs two officers and one contract worker without fax and FOREX (Foreign Exchange) facility. The branch avails internet through its own VSAT Disc Antenna.

4. Telephone Connectivity - The Bharat Sanchar Nigam Limited (BSNL)³⁴ office stationed at Champhai town has provided landline connectivity to the Composite Customs Building which is unable to catch the signal. Mobile phone networks of BSNL and other private operators are available with frequent call drops. One designated tower for phone connectivity is under construction in the site of the Composite Customs Building.
5. Electric and Water Supply – Electricity connection is irregular due to remote location. Water supply is directly taken from the River Tiau which is unhygienic especially after every rainfall and pipeline is frequently damaged by the World Bank Road construction underway.
6. Food Testing Mechanism - At present the food testing is done at Imphal in the neighbouring state of Manipur which is 626 km (approx) away from Zokawthar which makes it an unfeasible proposition. The Mizoram Government may be pressurized for immediate opening of the same.
7. Status of occupying the Composite Building – Other than the Customs Officials , the State Bank of India branch, the Trade and Commerce, Government of Mizoram, Plant Quarantine Officer and Staff of Agriculture Department, Government of Mizoram are functioning from the Composite Building.

The above status of the infrastructures by the admission of a government report shows that the Zokawthar LCS requires a major overhaul to reach the trade intensive level of other LCS in the Northeast region, such as Moreh and Dawki. Inadequate functioning of the LCS is understandably an important factor behind the flourishing informal trade and smuggling. Before going into figures and narratives of cross border smuggling, let's understand the border trade mechanism in Zokawthar LCS along with the recent debate over new taxation regime..

Since the opening of the border trade in 2004, there exists three trading systems in Zokawthar LCS –

- (i) Traditional/Free Exchange Mechanisms – Under this mechanism, the free exchange of 22 locally produced goods such as mustard, vegetables, betel nuts, ginger etc. are permitted to be exchanged among people across the border as per the prevailing customary practice through simple Customs documentation. People living within 40 km of the border can participate in such practice and the value of each transaction should be below 1000\$ (approx Rs 64000). The export is to be balanced by importing goods of equivalent value within one/two days and vice-versa. Customs duty is not chargeable

on the goods and Guaranteed Remittance (GR) system is not required under this system.

- (ii) Barter Mechanism – Under this mechanism the exporter/importer having Import Export Code (IEC) certificate from ‘Office of the Directorate of Foreign Trade’ are allowed to carry out the trade on 62 items which includes the 22 items of the Traditional Mechanism. Additional items were added in the Schedule I of the Agreement between India and Myanmar in two stages – 2008 and 2012. No monetary transaction is allowed under barter trade agreement. The consignment must be invoiced in US dollars and shouldn’t however exceed \$20,000 per transaction. Customs duty, cess and other duties are to be assessed on the basis of the Customs tariff and other notifications and instructions issues from time to time chargeable on the items.
- (iii) Normal/ Regular Trade Mechanism - Under this mechanism, export/import is permissible under EXIM³⁵ policy in freely convertible currencies or in currencies mutually agreed upon by the two nations through LoC (Line of control) or advance payment. Advance payments for import transactions in 2016-17 under Schedule (J) were handled by bank branches in Chaphai town as the State Bank of India, Zokhawthar branch couldn’t handle the same.

Among the three trade mechanisms, the first two have been taking place through indigenous market mechanisms prior to the setting up of the LCS. According to government LCS report, the normal trade has been gaining momentum for quite sometime. However it suffered a major blow after the basic duty of Areca (betel) nuts was increased from 0% to 40% by the Customs department, the existing importers stopped importing areca nuts speculating no profit in the venture. Earlier the imports of areca nut involved levy of Special Countervailing Duty (CVD) of 4%. According to the new directive³⁶ the total tax payable for import of areca nuts stand at – 40% (basic) + 4%(CVD) + 3% Cess. Local businessmen and government officials in Champhai voiced their displeasure over the new taxation regime as it curtailed trade activities. A former army general with a longstanding engagement shared in a personal interview – ‘Higher tax would make it difficult for traders to avail the formal channel. This however doesn’t mean that trade would stop; it would only be bypassed through the informal trade routes. People can simply transport the goods on head load by walking over the Tiao river’. Notably there are 15 other informal trade routes across the 510km unfenced Mizoram-Myanmar border. While most of the terrestrial trade activities between Myanmar and India takes place through the town of Moreh in Manipur (over 90% of the trade according to multiple estimates), there is a reasonable prospect for Zokawthar to grow as a trading centre in near future. Geographically

Zokawthar is within 50-60 km of two towns – Tiddim and Falam in the Chin state of Myanmar. Advancing a little further up to 120 km would lead into the town of Kalemyo in the Saigang division. Kalemyo has an industrial base and equipped with an airport, and provides access to Central Myanmar which has attracted considerable 'Foreign Direct Investments'. While Kalemyo is well connected to Moreh, the Zokawthar-Kalemyo road is yet to be viable for heavy vehicle movement; according to a report of Mizoram state government "a detailed project report entailing an investment of Rs 711.47 crore was also approved by Delhi".³⁷ A prime advantage of this route over the Kalemyo-Moreh route is that it is shorter in distance and bypasses the insurgency prone Saigang division of Myanmar. This route also bypasses Manipur and Nagaland in India, two states of the region most prone to political disturbance, therefore ensuring a free flowing access to the markets of mainland India upon completion.

Such kind of logistical endeavor can partially offset the volume of informal trade and allow Mizoram to increase revenue collection through taxes imposed over formal trade. Revenue generation is an imperative of the Mizoram government, as while nine-tenth of its revenue are being allotted by the central government, a report suggests that the inward flow of funds from the central government is falling due to strict fiscal management regime in India.³⁸

Interviews with the government and security officials during the field work collectively suggested the multiple challenges of governing the borderland due to incessant population movement with the arrow of allegation towards the Chins of Myanmar, with smuggling being the common complain. Unfenced border across the hilly topography makes it difficult to monitor the movements of people and goods. Going by the statistics of 2012, Mizoram has one of the highest numbers of police personnel i.e. 1003 per 100,000 persons in the country, however the numbers of police personnel per 100 sq.km stands at 48.5 which lower than the national average and most of the other states of Northeast India.³⁹ Vehicles in hills have an average longevity of 5 years, however no budgetary provisions have been sanctioned to buy new vehicles for nearly the last two decades.⁴⁰ Therefore it becomes an uphill task for the security forces to keep the hilly borders under surveillance. Smugglers frequently use the hilly foot tracks in the vast forest. One of the policemen at the Superintendent of Police office opined that only by replicating the surveillance methods across the USA-Mexico border, the Indo-Myanmar border can be secured in Mizoram. Such affectual attachment with infrastructure has been described by Czech historian Mrazek as an "enthusiasm of imagination" referring to the confidence attested with technologies which comes with infrastructure.⁴¹ Arms and drugs are frequently smuggled through the borders, interviewed officials stated that only a small percentage of which can be apprehended and confiscated. Officials of the Land Customs Station in Zokawthar are also functioning as an Anti-Smuggling Unit by combining forces with the Customs Preventive Force based in Champhai from time to time. The following figures will give us an idea about the intensity of smuggling and seizures in the Champhai Zokawthar belt –

Table 1 - Seizure Figures in the last 7 years

Year	Number of Cases	Seizure Value (In Indian Rupees)
2009-10	31	25,38,200
2010-11	29	51,63,520
2011-12	18	69,47,700
2012-13	28	64,12,895
2013-14	08	40,90,240
2014-15	02	37,25,000
2015-16	00	0
2016-17(till 13 March, 2017)	01	4,62,400

Source: Brief Status of Land Customs Station, Zokawthar, Till 13 March 2017.

Table2 – Annual Statement (On Drugs) Seized By Police, Champhai district

Year	Number of Cases Registered	No. of Persons Arrested	Items Seized/Name of Drugs					
			Heroin	Opium	Ganja	Alprozelum	Ephedrine	Pseudophedrine
2014	45	53	340gms	nil	50kgs	Nil	1.550kgs	Nil
2015	35	42	231.785gms	Nil	149.5kgs	82 tablets		3,20,000 tablets
2016	27	33	332.5gms	Nil	95kgs	Nil	nil	Nil

Source: Primary documents collected from the office of Superintendent of Police Office, Champhai.

Cases have been recorded where the narcotics department have confiscated arms while looking for drugs. In 2014 the Champhai Police seized 15 AK 47s and ammunitions; in 2015 they unearthed a cache of US-made M-series weapons, not known to be used by insurgent groups in this part of the country. Among the drugs, meth has been the biggest source of headache for the Mizoram Narcotics Department. Meth is commonly known as party drug is a combination of Ephederin and Pseudophedrine, both of which has been confiscated separately by the Champhai police over the last few years (see Table 2). Meth is used in medicines to treat common cold which makes it easier to smuggle. Six-seven anti-cold tablets have enough

ephedrine to produce one meth tablet, which is popped or inhaled. While the anti cold medicines are smuggled into Shan state of Myanmar after being procured from Kolkata and Guwahati, after processing the drugs are stored in Falam from where they are smuggled back into India through Champhai.⁴² The availability of drugs has led to an adverse impact on a section of population in Mizoram, several of the drug addicts find their way into rehabilitation centres. Champhai has 4 de addiction centre. In the interviews police officials attributed drug addiction as the prime reason for theft in the localities of Mizoram.⁴³ In order to tackle the drug related cases, Mizoram Assembly passed the Mizoram Drug (Controlled Substances) Bill, 2016. which authorized law enforcement agencies to seize and prosecute people possessing and selling drugs, including those legally manufactured in the country. This act was necessitated as the conviction rates by the earlier law - Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances Act, 1985 was extremely low in Mizoram due to complex procedures and stringent provisions laid down in the act.⁴⁴

During an interview at the Customs Office in Champhai, on 13 March 2017, the author came across a seized consignment of 220 kg pangolin scale which was apprehended at the Champhai police outstation the night before. According to an official posted at the Customs Office the consignment was on its way to Myanmar where it would be sold for Rs 70,000/kg (\$1100 approx/kg), which would eventually make way to China where it's likely to be sold at Rs 1,00,000/kg (\$1550 approx/kg). Two peddlers were arrested in relation to the confiscation and both of them were Chins from Myanmar. The official shared his insights–

“It's common for women to indulge into smuggling of goods across the border. One can easily walk off a marriage in this area, which mostly leaves the women in a precarious position, particularly if she has to take the responsibilities of the children. My observation suggests that such instances occur frequently among the Chins in Myanmar than among the Mizos in Mizoram, which might be due to lesser education level in Myanmar. It is difficult for us to apprehend the smugglers these days; even if we would try to set a trap by offering them money, they would ask for the transaction to take place along the Indo-Myanmar therefore giving us limited scope of pursuing them due to boundary constraints”.

It is through crimes in the eyes of law that we can locate two phenomenons – the disproportionate expansion of Champhai as a town with regards to its population and a fault line among the Mizos on the basis of citizenship. In the following section we would dwell into the issues.

Champhai Expanding : Urbanization and the Ethnic Fissures

Commentators have observed that with regards to the population, Champhai has overgrown in terms of business and infrastructure. A journalist observed – “the district town of Champhai has a disproportionately large and thriving marketplace dotted with stores selling a wide range of household”⁴⁵. The thriving marketplace has simultaneously given rise to associated financial and logistical infrastructures such as bank, informal currency exchange facilities (comprising of Indian Rupees and Myanmar Kyat), multiple travel routes, hotels etc. Existence of such networks enabled Champhai to weather the demonetization move taken by the Indian government in September 2017. Bank accounts of the residents of Champhai served as surrogate bank accounts wherein they deposited the money of the numerous betel nut cultivators across the Indo-Myanmar border area where most of the people are yet to have a bank account. A closer examination of the revenue collection over the years by the Office of the Assistant Commissioner of Taxes, Champhai Zone would give us a sense of Champhai’s expansion:

Table 3: Monthly Revenue Collection with effect from April 2012 –February, 2017

	2012-13(Rs)	2013-14(Rs)	2014-15(Rs)	2015-16(Rs)	2016-February 2017(Rs)
Profession Tax	1,02,40,644	1,14,25,109	1,31,25,130	1,20,24,297	1,33,18,208
MVAT	1,30,73,055	1,55,86,863	1,95,78,150	2,08,01,598	2,39,76,468
POL	17,90,449	3,90,050	16,76,617	6,28,627	3,14,233
OTHERS	19,645	29,568	NA	NA	NA
ENTERTAINMENT TAX	2,35,300	4,78,030	6,00,420	7,65,400	7,31,160
MIZORAM ENTRY TAX	NA	NA	NA	NA	2,18,694
CST	NA	NA	NA	1,98,288	6,90,227
Total	2,53,59,093	2,79,09,320	3,49,80,317	3,44,18,210	3,92,48,990

MVAT – Mizoram Value Added Tax, CST – Central Sales Tax. POL – Petroleum Tax.

Source: Primary Document Collected from the Office of the Assistant Commissioner of Taxes, Champhai Zone: Champhai.

From the figures we can deduce that tax collection has been increasing over the years, with the exception in 2015-16, which can be considered as an indication of increased economic activities in Champhai district. Understandably most of the revenues are generated by the activities in Champhai town. A notable addition in the tax list is the Mizoram Entry Tax in 2016-2017 financial years. The Mizoram Entry Tax Bill was passed by the Mizoram Assemble House in July 2015. The bill sought to levy entry tax on 45 items imported to Mizoram and the government expected to collect additional revenue of Rs 300 lakh annually by enforcing the act. The state finance and taxation minister Lalsawta stated that The fund would be used for construction, development and maintenance of roads and bridges in the state, creation, development and maintenance of infrastructure for supply of electrical energy, water supply and sanitation while also providing finance, aids, grants and subsidies to the local bodies and government agencies for creation of infrastructure.⁴⁶ It can be speculated that perhaps due to the double taxation imposed by the Customs Department (discussed in an earlier section) and the Mizoram Entry Tax the target of raising 300 lakh through the Mizoram Entry Tax fell short (see Table 3). It's therefore fair to assume that until the tax regime of both the central and state governments are introspected collectively; probability lies that traders would resort to informal trade channels and thereby negatively influencing the revenue generation targets of Mizoram.

Champhai now functions as a municipality with the town segregated into 15 municipal wards, elections are held regularly. Simultaneously the customary village council functions in Champhai which undertakes several important decisions with regards to the locality. Lalengkima works in the Urban Development Office who shared that the municipal works in Champhai are carried out in collaboration with the village council. He further adds –

We are aware about the expanding size of Champhai in terms of area and population in the coming days. At present we are doing our best to maintain the cleanliness of the town. In multiple schools and colleges we have undertaken programmes to convey the significance of Swacch Bharat Mission⁴⁷. We have 14 labour sweeping the streets and 10 labours collecting garbage. At present Champhai generates 6quintal/day amount of garbage. Government schemes under the National Urban Livelihood Mission (NULM) are operational in Champhai. We facilitate the Informal Skill Training Programme (ISTP) under which people are given training to avail employment opportunities in motor workshops, hotels, security services, hospitals etc. Soft loans are given out under a scheme. Schemes to tackle urban homeless have become essential due to Champhai attracting migrants from different places. Vending zones have been demarcated and the vendors are now being given identity cards.

Lalengkima's narrative shows the multiple levels of state institutions functioning in Champhai. Going by the government reports about Champhai, it emerged that housing was one of the prime areas of policy intervention. Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana (PMAY) is a scheme sponsored by the Government of India, wherein the government pays Rs1,50,000 and the beneficiary pays Rs 50,000. By 2015 Champhai district had 3795 households under PMAY, only Aizawl and Lunglei district has more houses under PMAY during the time period.⁴⁸ As Champhai is deemed to grow as it facilitates trade and mobility, government schemes such as PMAY would likely maintain its relevance due to the in-migration of labours belonging to weaker economic strata. Going by statistics of 2013-14 period Champhai town had 2,231 households and 9,710 people the below poverty line; in line with most of the indicators of Mizoram, Champhai town ranked third in terms of hosting people below poverty line after Aizawl and Lunglei.⁴⁹ The following table shows estimated population of Champhai town according to a government report:

Table 4: Estimated Population of Champhai

Year	2021	2031	2041
Population ⁵⁰	42,468	53,601	67,382

Source: Housing for all beneficiary led construction and enhancement, Mizoram, *Urban Development and Poverty Alleviation Department, Mizoram*, (<http://mhupa.gov.in/writereaddata/Mizoram-06CSMC.pdf>), accessed on 23 May 2017).

The increase in population and the demographic profile of the same brings us to the presence of a fault line and a possibility of a deepening fault line in future. In an earlier section we have come across narratives of Champhais' residents about their Chin brethren settled in Champhai and elsewhere in Mizoram. Incidents such as eviction drives against the Chins by the Young Mizo Association (YMA) in 2003, on the basis of an allegation of rape against a Chin, show the level of antagonism enshrined on the question of citizenship. That however has not deterred the Chins from entering Mizoram or using it as a transit space.

Notably Mizoram has the provision of the Inner Line Permit (ILP) wherein any citizen outside Mizoram would require an ILP pass to enter Mizoram which validates the person's presence in Mizoram for a stipulated period. ILP has ensured that Mizoram has maintained its predominant Mizo character. Though the ILP serves as a barrier for the *vai* (plain people from the mainland India recognizable due to physical differences), it ceases to be a barrier for the Chins. As Pachau observes, "Mizos often use phrases such as *keimahni ang* or 'like us' to refer to them.", wherein 'them' includes the ethnic brethrens of Chin state in Myanmar.⁵¹

Concentration of economic activities like trade and infrastructural expansions makes Champhai town as an attractive site for migration from the rural areas as well as across

the border. While citizenship is a major divider among the Mizo and Chins, perception of involvement in crimes creates an unfavourable attitude towards the Chins of Myanmar. Smuggling being a common accusation, crimes under the purview of 'Protection of Child from Sexual Offence (POCSO) Act 2012' is often attributed to the Chins due to low level of literacy among them. Champhai district has three police stations, namely Champhai, Ngopa and Khawzal. Across the three police stations in Champhai the number of cases implicated under POCSO Act was 34 in 2014, 51 in 2015 and 23 in 2016. According to a police officer most of the cases under the POCSO Act involved Myanmar citizens and low level of education is the main reason.

Reifyng territory, Communitarian Faultlines: Mizoram's Prospect in Look and Act East Policy

Understanding the rise of Champhai as a border town in Mizoram will help us to situate how the borders are being governed in a postcolonial society and how border acts as the heuristic lens to interrogate the borderland dynamics. Once upon a time wilderness and uncertainty loomed large over the frontier regions, which perpetuated mechanisms such as 'line system' in order to manifest a partial control in order avoid any confrontation with the local communities rendered as 'savage and uncontrollable'. As the flow of trade is destined to increase across Champhai, it would be interesting to see how the local actors and institutions react, as in with regards to the control over the dividends which comes with additional movement of goods and people. The notable change has occurred in the fact that Chins from Myanmar are now using Mizoram, through spaces like Champhai, as a gateway to the major economic centres of Western and Southern India, wherein we can locate how the migration pattern has changed from 'rural to rural' to 'rural to urban', which in fact is a typical transition to a 'post frontier' space and lifestyle across Southeast Asian nations.⁵² The question therefore remains that to what level the transit and migration of the Chins would be internalized by the Mizo political class on the basis of communitarian considerations in the new ambience of trade and logistical expansion through which the frontiers are now transcended. Since the ILP limits the prospect of migrants coming from other parts of India into Mizoram, in corollary the logistical expansion would also require the labour of economic migrants, that being the contiguous population coming from the east in order to carry forward its endeavour to encash its frontier status.

Cross border trade and mobility coexists with smuggling of drugs, arms, trafficking and different prized commodities, which adds to the border differentials. This is a feature common across the borderlands in the world, take the example of Ciudad Juarez and Tijuana, two cities on the Mexican side of the US-Mexican border which has witnessed a trajectory of growth due to increased flow across the border accompanied by mass scale of gang wars and violence over the control of drug cartels. Commentators have observed that the lack of education and employment opportunities in such border regions is compensated by the opportunities offered by smuggling of goods and drugs.⁵³ According

to the census of 2011, Mizoram ranks third in literacy among the states of India,⁵⁴ the worrying aspect is the limited availability of employment opportunities for the educated section of the population. The option of intensifying agriculture is also limited as the village regrouping in the 70s had not only rendered a vast section of the population displaced, but it also uprooted them from their primary livelihood practice of jhum agriculture. Therefore the transfer of indigenous knowledge through oral medium and praxis through the Mizo institution such as *zawl* (a hut built near the *jhoom* field during harvesting and weeding) got hindered and left the new generation detached from agriculture.⁵⁵ Outmigration has therefore a prominent phenomenon in recent years from Mizoram, which is also typical of the other states in Northeast India. Chances are however fair that if a person is not skilled enough to migrate elsewhere and work, s(he) might be tempted by the prospect of smuggling activities or engagement in an anti state actor. It is therefore fair to suggest that if infusion of capital is not synced with adequate skill development, it is likely to push the locals into a further marginal position wherein people might resort to unaccounted rent seeking and women might end up in low wage labour and sex work.

In the neo-liberal period border has been reoriented as a space for transit, movement and flows, perhaps acting as the last frontier for resource and rent extraction. Such praxis has been common elsewhere in Southeast Asia. Peter Hirsch's observation on frontier spaces in Thailand holds relevance for the Northeast as well, "The spatial stabilizing of the frontier has seen in-situ dynamism, as mainstream and market driven relations of productions have entrenched social relations that increasingly mirror less of peripheral spaces."⁵⁶ Against the wake of strict fiscal management, it also becomes imperative for the immediate governing institution, in this case the Mizoram Government, to make full use of the dividends of mobility across the border. In this way flow becomes the prominent phenomenon on which the state hinges its hope and pledges commitments in the form of infrastructures such as roads and Land Custom Stations, thereby confirming Lefebvre's insight on the correlation between the space and the state: "economy is recast in spatial terms – flows(energy, raw materials) and stocks (gold, capital, machines). State tends to control flows and stock by ensuring coordination." Apparently this act of coordination has been taking place across Southeast Asia in the form of multiple sub regional trans-border initiatives such as Greater Mekong Subregion (Yunan, Vietnam, Laos, Cambodia), Indonesia, Malaysia, Thailand Growth Triangle, Greater Tumen Initiative and Southern Growth Triangle.⁵⁷ In the Northeast this coordination is being envisaged through Look and Act East Policy which involves two levels of connectivity – i. linking mainland India with Southeast Asian nations. ii. Linking mainland India with Northeast India through Bangladesh⁵⁸.

In order to achieve a reasonable convergence of sub regional integration with regionalism, peace is a necessary pre-condition. In this regard Mizoram, besides Tripura, is one particular state which has been witness to more or less peaceful status since signing of the Mizoram Accord in 1986. Cross border initiative like the Kaladan Multimodal Transit Transport Project have taken into account of connecting Mizoram

with mainland India through waterways and land routes of Myanmar. In recent times logistical expansion has been taking place in Mizoram which is a major thrust area of India's Act East Policy in the Northeast; for instance in 2016 Mizoram was connected with railway when a goods train reached Bairabi station in Western Mizoram's Mammit district from Katakhal station in Hailakandi district, Assam. Railway construction is ongoing till Sairang (20km north of Aizawl).¹ Tripura is one of the states in Northeast which has been proactive in India's Look and Act East Policy over the time, Tripura is also keen to include Mizoram in the railway route under the trans-regional connectivity initiative. The Tripura government in response to a letter from India's Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) for suggestions on trans-regional connectivity suggested extending railway connectivity from Jawaharnagar in Tripura to Kalay in Myanmar through Darlawn in Mizoram and then onward to Singapore via Thailand. The distance between Jawaharnagar to Kalay via Mizoram stands at 257 km.² The industrial base of Kalay city would serve as a beneficial connectivity for both Mizoram and Tripura. Geographically Mizoram holds a strategic location as it is the only state in Northeast India which shares borders with Myanmar and Bangladesh, and thereby serves as a connecting space, not only in logistical terms, but also between the numerous clans of the Kuki-Mizo-Chin communities spread across from the Chin state of Myanmar to Chittagong Hill Tracts of Bangladesh. Terrestrial cross border trade between India and Myanmar takes place through Manipur and Mizoram. Only a fraction of the potential has been realized till date due to inadequate infrastructure and fragile peace situation in Manipur. Inadequacy of infrastructure across Northeast India and Western Myanmar is likely to be addressed through multiple sub-regional initiatives such as Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation (BIMSTEC) and Bangladesh-China-India-Myanmar Forum for Regional Cooperation (BCIM), with India and Myanmar as participant members.

While peace building in Manipur remains a formidable challenge, there lies opportunity and prospects for Mizoram to take advantage of its peaceful status and involve as a stakeholder in the projects which would improve Mizoram's internal infrastructure and bolster the trading activities through Mizoram. In corollary Mizoram would also serve the purpose of hosting a feasible alternative land route to connect with Myanmar. The political transformation in Myanmar from a military dictatorship to a democratic model in late 2015 has improved its economy overall; growth rate has been within 7-8%³ and Foreign Direct Investments⁴. Therefore connectivity with Myanmar would give access to

¹ "Sanctioned in 2000, broad gauge train reaches Mizoram after 16 years," *The Indian Express*, 21 March 2016, <http://indianexpress.com/article/india/india-news-india/sanctioned-in-2000-broad-gauge-train-reaches-mizoram-after-16-years/>, accessed July 5 2017.

² Letter to Joint Secretary (BM) in Indian Ministry of External Affairs from Samarjit Bhowmik, transport secretary, Government of Tripura number. F17 (5)-Trans/2015 dated April 2, 2016, reproduced in Subir Bhowmik, Bangladesh: Key to India's Look East.

³ "Myanmar Economic Monitor, May 2016," *The World Bank*, <http://www.worldbank.org/en/country/myanmar/publication/myanmar-economic-monitor-may-2016>, accessed July 5, 2017.

⁴ "Myanmar Foreign Direct Investment," <https://tradingeconomics.com/myanmar/foreign-direct-investment>, accessed July 5, 2017.

its growing economy; it would also serve India's geopolitical concern of China's increasing influence in Myanmar. If Mizoram transforms itself into a gateway into Myanmar, it would serve both regional and national purposes and would be crucial for a successful implementation of Act East Policy.

The element of securitization and act of securing the borders are inextricably linked with the infrastructural activities in Northeast India. While borders with Bangladesh are under political scrutiny with regular demands to seal the borders, border with Myanmar has been majorly on paper. Postcolonial borders are yet to infringe the mobility rights of the multiple communities across the borders such as Nagas, Kukis, Chins and Mizos. Rather open borders have allowed the Myanmarese citizens with shared ethnicities on the Indian side of the border to seek refuge in India during political turmoil in Myanmar.⁵⁹ Security concerns have led the Indian state to ponder over fencing of the Indo-Myanmar border which has been opposed in Nagaland and Mizoram.⁶⁰ Demarcating the territory will remain an important agenda of the state situated in the centre, however as the periphery is set to create its own niche of centrality owing to cross border movements, it would voluntarily assert its own opinion. Significantly fixating the borders with barriers of surveillance creates the paradox with regards to free movement of goods across the borders. Like the Northeast, India holds the dilemma in other borderland spaces, such as in North Bengal where a proposal to create a free trade zone area was mooted in the early 2000s between India, Nepal, Bangladesh and Bhutan. Such proposals again simultaneously coexist with repeated demands of securing international borders manifested through heavy securitization of the region.⁶¹ State governments in the so called mainland India have always endorsed the increasing presence of security forces in the border. Frontier states like Nagaland and Mizoram have however taken a different stance which is suggestive of an alternate imagined territory which may not coincide with the existing borders. Moreover the relative peace in Mizoram in an otherwise volatile region makes the proposition of imposition of decision a risky affair. With most of the states in the Northeast India depending on high ratios of central fund for their revenues, it's in the borders that the region can invest its energy and hope to overturn the dependency status. The transformation of the US-Mexican borders as the nexus of NAFTA economy due to cross border trade could be a testament to the future envisaged for the frontiers in Southeast Asia.⁶² The probability of such transformation in Northeast India heavily hinges on India's Look and Act East Policy. Geographically speaking the territories of India in the Northeast starts protruding southwards of the Barak Valley in Assam which leaves a limited hinterland for the states of Mizoram, Tripura and Manipur. Therefore, as argued by Subir Bhaumik, if Bangladesh is not integrated in India's Look and Act East Policy, the hope of a peaceful and developed Northeast India would be alluding India and more importantly the citizens of the region.⁶³ It may well be the case that one major border trading centre, that being Moreh, is enough to handle most of the terrestrial trade traffic between India and Myanmar. Since Mizoram, like most of the other states in the region barely produce any surplus, it's likely only through the flow of goods, commodities, labour and capital, that Mizoram can seek the opportunity to consolidate itself on firm financial grounds.

While the paper begins with the agenda of interrogating the urbanism of Champhai across the borders, the preceding sections point out that the connotations of being situated in a borderland doesn't restrict itself to Champhai and expands across Mizoram. Management of the flows across border will shape Champhai's future and will be crucial to the Mizo identity project. The national borders don't always coincide with the borders of ethnic solidarity and imagination. Also the national border creates the notion of citizenship which at times undermines the communitarian linkages. The anticipated vibrancy created in the borderlands as a result of its spatially transitional status would likely steer the peripheries into trajectories which would have the potential to be less dependent, if not independent, from the centre. Sufficiency if achieved would naturally lead to an enhanced bargaining power of local power hierarchies and may as well reorient the terms of border and citizenship in the region. Therefore it's through the contradictions of flows and fixities that Mizoram has to navigate its way from a frontier space to a probable post-frontier space in the coming days wherein the role and functioning of border towns like Champhai will have considerable bearings.

¹ On social governance in Northeast India see- Ranabir Samaddar, "Government of Peace", in R. Samaddar (Ed.), *Government of Peace: Social Governance, Security and the Problematic of Peace* (Surrey: Ashgate Publishing Limited, 2015), pp.19-57.

² Paula Banerjee, "Women, Conflict, and Governance in Nagaland", in R. Samaddar (Ed.), *Government of Peace: Social Governance, Security and the Problematic of Peace* (Surrey: Ashgate Publishing Limited, 2015), pp. 133-167.p.136.; Snehashish Mitra and Ranabir Samaddar, 'India's Look East Policy and the Northeast: Bridging Spaces or Widening Schisms?', *The Wire*, 7 January 2017, (<https://thewire.in/97491/bridging-spaces-widening-schisms-look-east-policy-northeast/>), accessed on 27 April, 2017).

³ For details on Look East policy with focus on Northeast India's logistics and infrastructure see - Ranabir Samaddar and Snehashish Mitra, "Bridge of Spaces: East by Rear East, Ab! The Northeast," Calcutta Research Group Research Paper Series, Policies and Practices 76, Kolkata: Calcutta Research Group, (2016).

⁴ C Raja Mohan, 'Three Decades of Mistrust', *Indian Express*, 25 April 2017, (<http://indianexpress.com/article/opinion/columns/three-decades-of-mistrust-sri-lanka-india-buddha-jayanti-celebrations-4626873/>), accessed on 27 April, 2017).

⁵ 'Manipur Blockade: Timeline', *The Hindu*, 19 March 2017, (<http://www.thehindu.com/news/national/other-states/timeline-on-manipur-blockade/article16978131.ece>), accessed on 27 April 2017); Dolly Kikon, 'Gender Justice in Naga Society – Naga Feminist Reflection', *Raiot*, 23 February 2017, (<http://raiot.in/author/dollykikon/>), accessed on 27 April 2017).

⁶ Dulali Nag, *Manipur between justice and law: Capital, ethnicity, and violence*, (New Delhi: Akansha Publishing House, 2011).

⁷ Esha Roy, 'Simply Put: Seven new districts that set Manipur Ablaze', *Indian Express*, 20 December 2016, (<http://indianexpress.com/article/explained/manipur-violence-new-districts-okram-ibobi-united-naga-council-4436039/>), accessed on 28 April 2017).

⁸ Kaladan river flows between Sittwe and Paletwa. *Kaladan Multi Modal Transit Transport Project*, 2014, (<http://www.mdoner.gov.in/content/introduction-1>), accessed on 28 April 2017).

⁹ Zokawthar is a small settlement across the Indo-Myanmar border located in Champhai district of Mizoram.

- ¹⁰ Pratim Ranjan Bose, 'The Reality Behind Mizoram's Trade Hotspot', *The Hindu: Business Line*, 1 July 2015, (<http://www.thehindubusinessline.com/economy/the-reality-behind-mizorams-trade-hotspot/article7375439.ece> , accessed on 28 April 2017).
- ¹¹ Tim Bunnell and Anant Mariganti, "Practising Urban and Regional Research Beyond Metrocentricity," *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research*. 34.2, (2010): 415-20.
- ¹² Duncan McDuiera, *Borderland City in New India: Frontier to Gateway* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2016).
- ¹³ Atig Ghosh, "The Importance of Being Siliguri, or the Lack Thereof: Border-Effect and the Untimely City in North Bengal", *Policy and Practices, Calcutta Research Group*, 83 (2017).
- ¹⁴ On transformations of cities into logistical hubs and centres see, Ranabir Samaddar, "The Logistical City", *India International Quarterly*, 43 (Winter 2016- Spring 2017).
- ¹⁵ *Citizen's Charter*, Office of the Deputy Commissioner Champhai District, Champhai. 2015.
- ¹⁶ Data referred from *Statistical Handbook, Mizoram*, Directorate of Economics & Statistics, Mizoram, 2014, p. 4.
- ¹⁷ Sajal Nag, "Disciplining Villages and Restoring Peace in the Countryside", in R. Samaddar (Ed.), *Government of Peace: Social Governance, Security and the Problematic of Peace* (Surrey: Ashgate Publishing Limited, 2015), pp. 57-79.p.69.
- ¹⁸ Nag, "Disciplining Villages", p.69.
- ¹⁹ 'Mizoram: Forced Urbanisation', *Economic and Political Weekly*, 5 September 1981, p.1439.
- ²⁰ Decadal growth of Mizoram is 27.40 % according to the census of 2011, the lowest in Northeast India. See – Kh. Bimolata Devi, 'A study on urbanization of North Eastern states of India', *International Journal of Current Research*, 4.10, 2012, pp.272-276, p.47.
- ²¹ Figures of 1971 and 1981 referred from - 'Mizoram: Forced Urbanisation', *Economic and Political Weekly*, 5 September 1981, p.1439.; figure of 2011 compiled from - 'Basic Statistics of North Eastern Region 2015', North Eastern Council Secretariat, Shillong. pp.8 and 9.
- ²² Samaddar and Mitra, "Bridge of Spaces", p.29.
- ²³ Details shared by an official working in the Urban Development Office, Champhai. In Mizo language *veng* means locality.
- ²⁴ Zo people refers to the people whose natural habitat is the hills, comprising of the Mizo, Kuki, Chin and Zomi tribes with close affinity to each other's dialects and culture. They are settled across Northeast India, Northwest Myanmar and the Chittagong Hill Tracts in Bangladesh.
- ²⁵ Joy L.K. Pachau, *Being Mizo: Identity and Belonging in the Northeast* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2014) p.9.
- ²⁶ Pachau, *Being Mizo*, p.14.
- ²⁷ Lushai community is a prominent block of the Mizo ethnicity among many others. The Lushais of Myanmar would identify themselves Mizos. Over time Chins, spread across India, Myanmar and Bangladesh, have debated their categorization under the Mizo identity. Joy Pachau (2014: 11) observes that "Mizos tend to see 'tribes' outside their state as Mizo hanhtlak 'branches of Mizo'" and thus Mizo, this ethnonym has not always been accepted by, those thus called, who at times have preferred the use of ethnonyms such as Kuki, and more recently Zo. In many ways, therefore, Mizo identity is a perfect example of what may be called as a situational identity....The Maras and Lais in Mizoram are averse to calling themselves Mizo." Pachau goes on to cite a narrative wherein a group of Chins acclaim that Chins and Mizos are the same and Aizawl is seen as the cultural capital, their Zawlkhawpui. Hereafter the members of the broader Zo community from Chin state of Myanmar would be referred as 'Chin'.
- ²⁸ The name of the respondents has been changed.
- ²⁹ Pemlekha is a letter certifying earlier place of residence by the local headman of that locality.
- ³⁰ According to- Estt. Order No. 05/2004, Dt. 28 January 2004.
- ³¹ My good friend Lalengkima, a research scholar in Mizoram University, explained the etymology of Zokhawthar.
- ³² Observations during fieldwork undertaken in March 2017.
- ³³ Brief Status of Land Customs Station, Zokawthar : Till 13 March 2017 (undated). The document was procured from the Office of Central Excise Department, Champhai.
- ³⁴ BSNL is India's state owned telecommunication enterprise.
- ³⁵ EXIM is a set of guidelines and instructions established by the DGFT (Directorate General of Foreign Trade) in matters related to the import and export of goods in India.
- ³⁶ Refer to letter - C.No. VIII(21)2/Cus/ Tech / IMT/2016/10488-90(A) issues by Customs Headquarter, Shillong dated 16 September 2016, reproduced in *Brief Status of Land Customs Station, Zokawthar*.
- ³⁷ Pratim Ranjan Bose, 'Open Border and thriving informal trade: Problems and prospects of promoting India-Myanmar trade through Mizoram', *Viewpoint* ,3 November 2015, (

<http://pratimview.blogspot.in/2015/11/open-border-and-thriving-informal-trade.html>, accessed on 18 May 2017).

³⁸ M. Rajsekhar, 'A new gateway to the North East runs into – and jumps over – a corruption roadblock', *The Scroll*, 18 May 2017 (<https://scroll.in/article/729210/a-new-gateway-to-the-north-east-runs-into-and-jumps-over-a-corruption-roadblock>, accessed on 18 May 2017); M. Rajsekhar, 'As centre changes fund sharing formula NorthEast faces an unprecedented financial crisis', *The Scroll*, 20 May 2015,

(<https://scroll.in/article/728152/as-centre-changes-fund-sharing-formula-north-east-faces-an-unprecedented-financial-crisis>, accessed on 18 May 2017)

³⁹ See 'Basic Statistics of North Eastern Region 2015.' pp.311.

⁴⁰ Pratim Ranjan Bose, 'Drugs and Arms: Mizoram Fights an Uphill Battle', *Business Line*, (<http://www.thehindubusinessline.com/news/variety/drugs-and-arms-mizoram-fights-an-uphill-battle/article7383679.ece> , accessed on 19 May 2017).

⁴¹ R Mr'azek, *Engineers of Happy Land: Technology and Nationalism in a Colon*, (Princeton, NJ: Princeton Univ. Press, 2002), p.166.

⁴² Bose, 'Drugs and Arms'.

⁴³ In 2012-13, 647 cases of theft and in 2013-14, 717 cases of theft was files under the Indian Penal Code, the highest among all the categories of crime. *Statistical Handbook, Mizoram*, Directorate of Economics & Statistics, Mizoram, 2014, p. 104.

⁴⁴ Press Trust of India 'Mizoram Unanimously Pass Drug Bill 2016', *Business Standard*, 7 December 2016, (http://www.business-standard.com/article/pti-stories/mizoram-house-unanimously-pass-drug-bill-2016-116120700792_1.html , accessed on 19 May 2017).

⁴⁵ Bose, 'Open Border and Thriving Informal Trade'.

⁴⁶ "Mizoram Entry Tax Bill Passed", *Business Standard*, 9 July 2015, (http://www.business-standard.com/article/pti-stories/mizoram-entry-tax-bill-passed-115070900684_1.html, accessed on 24 May 107).

⁴⁷Swacch Bharat Mission' is a cleanliness drive advocated by the Government of India.

⁴⁸ Housing for all beneficiary led construction and enhancement, Mizoram, *Urban Development and Poverty Alleviation Department, Mizoram*, (<http://mhupa.gov.in/writereaddata/Mizoram-06CSMC.pdf> , accessed on 23 May 2017).

⁴⁹ "Statistical Handbook, Mizoram 2014,"90.

⁵⁰ Figures of population projection are an average of Arithmetical Increase Method, Geometric Increase Method and Incremental Increase Method.

⁵¹ Pachau, *Being Mizo*, p.16.

⁵² I have borrowed the term 'post frontier' from Peter Hirsch, "

⁵³ David A. Shirk, "A Tale of Two Mexican Border Cities: The Rise and Decline of Drug Violence in Juarez and Tijuana," *Journal of Borderland Studies*. 29.4 (2014):481-503.

⁵⁴ <http://www.census2011.co.in/states.php>

⁵⁵ For further details about how village regrouping affected *jhum* cultivation see - Sajal Nag, *Disciplining Countryside*, pp.70-75.

⁵⁶ Peter Hirsch, "Revisiting Frontiers as Transitional Spaces in Thailand," *The Geographical Journal*, 175.2 (2009) 124-132.

⁵⁷ For details about the sub regional initiatives see – Gurudas Das, Ujwal Pal and Tanuj Mathur, "Sub-Regional Cooperation for the Development of Landlocked Peripheral Areas," *South Asian Survey*, 20.1 (2013).

⁵⁸ On the relevance of Bangladesh in Look and Act East Policy, see Subir Bhaumik, "*Bangladesh: The Key to India's Look East Through Northeast*," Calcutta Research Group Research Paper Series, Policies and Practices 76, Kolkata: Calcutta Research Group, (2016).

⁵⁹ Manjeet Singh Negi, "Assam Rifles Repatriate 338 Myanmar Refugees from Mizoram," *IndiatodayIn*, May 25, 2017, <http://indiatoday.intoday.in/story/assam-rifles-myanmar-refuges-mizoram/1/962858.html>, accessed June 6, 2017.

⁶⁰ "New projects, not fencing, needed on India-Myanmar border," *The Shillong Times*, September 26, 2016, <http://www.theshillongtimes.com/2016/09/26/new-projects-not-fencing-needed-on-india-myanmar-border/>, accessed June 9 2016.

⁶¹ See Atig Ghosh, The Importance of Being Siliguri, pp.17-18.

⁶² David Shirk, A Tale of Two Mexican Border Cities, 486.

⁶³ Subir Bhaumik, "*Bangladesh: The Key to India's Look East Through Northeast*".