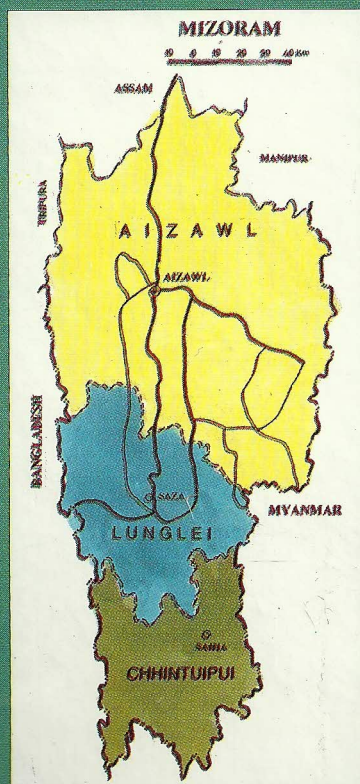


Research Priorities in North-East India

With Special Reference to Mizoram



L.S. Gassah

The book *Research Priorities in North-East India—With Special Reference to Mizoram*, is the outcome of the panel discussion sponsored by the ICSSR-NERC held at Mizoram. It attempts the areas which can be taken for further research in Social Science. Therefore, this book will be of great help to the research scholars in particular and the public in general.

Rs. 150/-

The Editor, **Dr. L.S. Gassah** is Professor of Political Science, North-Eastern Hill University, Shillong. His area of specialisation is Government and Politics in North-East India. Recently he wrote a book—*Traditional Institutions of Meghalaya: A Case Study of Doloï and his Administration*. He has also edited four books and published more than 40 research papers in different books, journals, proceedings of research organisations like N-E India Political Science Association, N-E India History Association, N-E India Council for Social Science Research (to mention a few of them) and has submitted five major projects to different organisations like ICSSR, Rajiv Gandhi Foundation and the State Govt. of Meghalaya. Dr. Gassah is also a life Member of many Research Bodies in N-E India. He was recently selected as one of the members of the Advisory Committee of the ICSSR (North-Eastern Regional Centre), Shillong for a term of two years.

RESEARCH PRIORITIES IN NORTH-EAST INDIA

(WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO MIZORAM)

Editor
L.S. GASSAH



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Foreword

The North-Eastern Regional Centre of the ICSSR decided in 1992, to sponsor a one day local level panel discussion on research priorities in different States of the North-East. Senior academics in the University departments identified were requested to gather together experts available locally in different fields in Social Sciences to identify priority areas of research through a meaningful discussion. For the State of Mizoram, the department of Economics, NEHU, Mizoram Campus, Aizawl, was identified, and the panel discussion was held on November 16, 1992.

In view of the limited financial assistance extended to the organisers they were not in a position to invite scholars from even different parts of the State concerned. Hence, the organisers had to depend on the co-operation of the scholars available locally. Dr. A.K. Agarwal invited about twenty-five experts from the disciplines of History, Political Science, Public Administration, Economics, Sociology, Education, Psychology, Geography, etc. from Colleges and the University departments of NEHU located there. Many invitees unfortunately did not turn up. They also failed to submit papers in their own areas. Altogether eleven papers were received from Sarvasri Thangchungnunga, Lianzela, B.K. Dutta, R.S. Wangu, B.D. Chinara, L.K. Jha, G. Kumar, R.K. Satpathy, S. Jawaid, S. Ganguly, and K. Adak and A. Dasgupta. I take this opportunity to thank Dr. A.K. Agarwal and his colleagues in the Department of Economics, NEHU, Mizoram Campus, Aizawl, for organising the panel discussion and all those who contributed papers and participated in the discussion.

Many Social Science disciplines in Mizoram were either not covered or were not adequately covered. Hence the

papers and panel discussions were kept in the NERC. About a year back Dr. C.J. Thomas, the Deputy Director of NERC suggested that the Research Priorities in the North-East be looked into afresh and evaluated. Thereafter, the panel discussions and papers were entrusted to scholars for editing and updating as far as possible.

Prof. L.S. Gassah was requested to go through the papers and panel discussions on Research Priorities in Mizoram. I thank Prof. Gassah for readily agreeing to undertake this work and for completing it well on time.

I hope that the Research Priorities in North-East India—Mizoram, in spite of its inadequacies, will be found useful by all those students and teachers interested in studying Mizoram. We are certain that the small work be received well by all those interested in researches on the region.

Shillong
July 2001

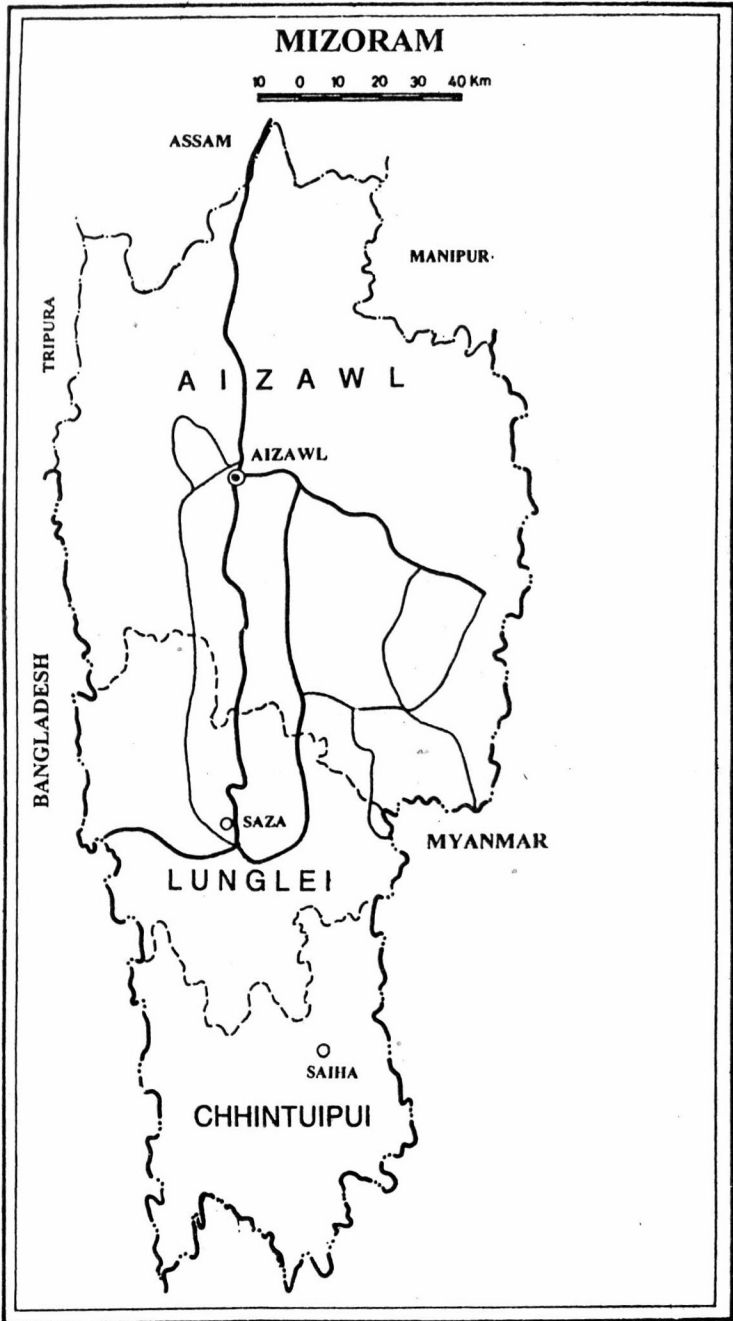
Jai Prakash Singh
Ex. Hon. Director
ICSSR-NERC

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MIZORAM

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Introduction

The Indian Council of Social Science Research, North-Eastern Regional Centre (ICSSR-NERC), Shillong had sponsored during 1992 a one-day local level Panel Discussion on Research Priorities in North-East all over the North-Eastern Region. The sponsor's plan was to mobilise the subject discipline experts in varied fields especially in Social Sciences for a fruitful discussion after the areas of research priorities have been identified. The subject/discipline experts submitted their research papers detailing in each paper the area(s) in which they felt that immediate attention should be given at a priority basis. This attempt made by the ICSSR-NERC is most welcome and has also paid a dividend, though this is only a small beginning. Such mobilisation and gathering of the Social Scientists of different disciplines from all the Seven sister States of North-East India should be encouraged from time to time in order to help generate more and varied academic information on State-specific research priorities. This sort of academic exercise will surely provide immense background materials and information, which may further be improved in course of time, if necessary.

Earlier, I had mentioned somewhere else about the problem of the lack of knowledge and co-ordination even among various Universities' departments of the North-Eastern region. There are many Universities as well as research institutions (both Central and State) set up in the whole of the region. But the lack of co-ordination or sometimes the absence of such effort by different Universities' departments gives rise to many problems of sharing of academic information. Such a situation also gives rise even to the problem of research students doing research on the same topic in more than two University

departments of the same discipline. This problem has arisen because of the fact that no one knows what others are doing in their research works. This should not have happened had there been an exchange of ideas and information among the various departments of different universities and research institutions in the region. It is high time therefore, that some ways and means should be devised for an exchange of ideas and information, among the various university and research institutions in the region in order to avoid duplication of doing research on the same topic(s) as well as to know who works on what problems or issues. This will also help to enrich the disciplines especially in terms of research and research priorities. The ICSSR-NERC may also take up an initiative on this pertinent issue in its future academic pursuits and programmes before it is too late.

Mizoram occupies the first position in terms of the rate of literacy in the whole of India. The number of persons who hold post-graduate and doctoral degree is also quite high among the Mizos. Therefore, a number of research topics on different disciplines, especially that of Social Sciences, have been covered with special reference to the issues and research problems among the Mizos. Such issues/research problems had been done not only by the Mizo intellectuals but many other non-Mizos including that of the British officials who served the then Lushai (Mizo) Hills in different capacities. These British frontier officials wrote a number of outstanding monographs, on different aspects of the socio-cultural life of the people, the traditional social and political institutions, the administrative development and other ethnographic accounts of the Mizos. These monographs still play an important resource background materials; sometimes researchers on the issues/problems relating to the Mizos cannot but refer to such accounts written by the Britishers. Also many non-Mizo intellectuals had conducted a number of research works on the Mizos in different fields and disciplines. Later, the Mizos themselves did their research on their own people. With the increase in the number of universities and research institutions in North-East India, many such research works are still continuing even today. It is against this background that many academicians in North-East India would like to know the

progress made in terms of research on the Mizos or about the Mizos and what are the priorities of research on and about them.

In order to promote the lofty idea of research and sharing of information with others in this age of fast development in science, technology and mass communication, the ICSSR-NEERC, Shillong, requested the Department of Economics, NEHU, Aizawl Campus to conduct a one-day Panel Discussion on the general theme 'Research Priorities in North-East India' with particular reference to Mizoram. NEHU's Department of Economics, Mizoram Campus, duly accepted the offer and also successfully conducted the Panel Discussion on the 16th November 1992 at Aizawl, the State capital of Mizoram.

Between the year of holding of the Panel Discussion and the publication of this booklet, many things have taken place in Mizoram academically. Thus, it is not wrong to state here that some of the areas of research which have been stated by the contributors in this volume as priority areas have of late been taken care by the local scholars and others also. This is so, because many Mizo research students have already enrolled themselves for Ph.D. and M.Phil degrees, especially in Political Science, History and Sociology in the two campuses of the North-Eastern Hill University at Shillong and Aizawl. But as at present the information is not readily available with the Editor of this volume, it may therefore be suggested that this matter may be looked into. There is, therefore, a need to update such information on the issues/topics of research which have already been completed or the ones which are going on now.

In view of the limited financial assistance earmarked for the Panel Discussion, the host Department invited the local scholars only from different colleges in Mizoram and those serving in the NEHU Campus at Aizawl. Accordingly, 25 (twenty five) subjects/discipline experts from the disciplines of History, Political Science, Public Administration, Economics, Sociology, Education, Psychology, Philosophy, Geography, Commerce, Forestry, Social Work and Geology were invited to contribute research papers focussing on the research activities in their subjects/disciplines and their related fields and

priorities. The scholars were also requested to suggest priority areas not only in their specific disciplines but also to keep in mind on how these priorities can be further researched on the basis of inter-disciplinary approach, wherever is viable.

In response to the invitation, 11 (eleven) papers from the scholars belonging to the discipline of Political Science, Public Administration, Economics, Education, English, Forestry, Geography and Commerce were submitted. There are 3 (three) papers in Economics, 2 (two) papers in Education and 1 (one) paper each in Forestry, Geography, Political Science, Public Administration, English and Commerce. It is very unfortunate that scholars from the disciplines like History, Philosophy, Sociology, Social Work, Psychology and Geology did not respond and therefore research priorities in these unrepresented disciplines could not be included in this book. We are, however, looking forward in the near future to cover those areas also.

Following are the authors and the title of their papers:

Economics

- Thangchungnutnga : Research in Land Economics
 Lianzela : Priorities in Economics
 B.K. Dutta : Problems and Priorities in Economics

Education

- R.S. Wangu : Priorities in Education
 B.D. Chinara : Priorities on Educational Research

Forestry

- L.K. Jha : Priorities in Forestry/Agroforestry

Geography

- G. Kumar : Priorities in Geography

Political Science

- R.K. Satpathy : Priorities and Problems in Political Science

Public Administration

- S. Jawaid : Research and Public Administration

English

- Siddhartha Ganguly : Priorities in Language Teaching: A Socio-Linguistic View

Commerce

Kalyan Adak and Ananda Das Gupta : Research in Commerce: Area, Problems and Prospects

A perusal of the 11 (eleven) papers presented and discussed during the Panel Discussion shows a tremendous amount of concern and academic consciousness among the paper writers on the diverse issues and problems relating to the State of Mizoram. Against this background, they have come out with many priority areas of research on the varied issues for necessary action on the part of the researchers and research institutions as well as governmental machinery. They have, therefore, suggested with all seriousness what are the priority areas and how to go about in conducting researches on these problem areas for better understanding of the prevailing and the future conditions of the people, that is, the Mizos and the society at large. They have called upon the State Government, the educational institutions and other authorities concerned to look into these issues and problems in order to bring about improvement in the society and its members.

On Economics, three papers were presented and discussed. Thangchungnunga in his paper highlighted the following areas for further consideration in research—(a) land resources, (b) land values, (c) land-ownership and tenancy, (d) land settlement, colonisation and policies. He is of the opinion that land-use and land economics are areas which deserve a lot more of research. Therefore, there is a need to undertake studies dealing with problems arising from the locational characteristics, rural land holding and influence of transport on land-use. He further highlighted on the issue of land tenure system in relation to farming and forestry in a changing situation. These issues give rise to the study of land economics under the broad perspectives of land-use and agriculture. He concluded by stating that research in land economics needs to discover the truth relating to social problems which have references to matters of policy and planning. Lianzela sets his priority areas on the issues and problems as well as the constraints and feasibility of marketing of agricultural and horticultural products outside of Mizoram; the need of population

studies including population explosion in Mizoram and the measures for controlling it; problem of power or electricity generation and suggests measures on the feasibility of hydel projects in the State. He also stresses on the need of active research to be taken on the problems of unemployment and vocationalisation of education in relation with its constraints of implementation and generation of jobs for the educated unemployed youth. Researches should also be encouraged on the problems of science education in Mizoram. Biljit K. Dutta's paper identified the gap that exists between the researches undertaken in the Universities and the non-implementation of the findings by the Government agencies. He therefore, felt the need for closer co-operation among different agencies as far as research and implementation of findings is concerned. He underlined the following as priority areas for an over-all development of the State of Mizoram: (a) A resource assessment of physical, geological and economic areas be identified, (b) Research on agriculture and its related problems needs to be strengthened, (c) Problems of unemployment and generation of jobs need to be undertaken seriously by researchers. Concluding his paper, Dutta observed that adopting a particular model may not be enough as far as research is concerned for the State like Mizoram. Therefore, he suggested a broad-based approach for better understanding of the ground realities in Mizoram.

As far as the discipline of Education is concerned, two papers were presented and discussed. R.S. Wangu in his paper, pointed out that the priority areas could be identified only after a thorough analysis of the on-going research is done. In Mizoram, under the auspices of the Education Department, NEHU, Aizawl Campus, the author is of the opinion that most of the researches concentrated on the educational psychology, educational development and management. Research on the sociological aspects are being neglected. Moreover, the rate of students' failure in the subjects like Science and Mathematics necessitates a deeper exploration and probe. Lastly, he suggested to have a deeper and thorough analysis of these problems by making 'naturalistic enquiries' or enquiries which would identify small groups in the target area for an in-depth study as against the big or large-scale sample studies on

hypothesis testing and conclusion. The other paper on Priorities of Research in Education was presented by B.D. Chinara. In his paper, Chinara emphasised on the strong relationship between education and development; the former is identified as an input to the latter. His paper surveys some research works already conducted and then proceeds to set the priority list for further research on this area. He identified such priority areas as—value education, popular education, vocational education, etc. He also elaborated on the constraints prevalent in these areas of priority research list.

On Forestry, we have a paper by L.K. Jha. In the absence of the author, the paper was not presented. However, the paper has also endeavoured to mention certain priority areas as far as the need for further research is concerned in this important aspect relating to Mizoram in particular and North-East India in general. In his paper, L.K. Jha cautioned the people about the serious problem of forest depletion in the country. This is attributable to relentless pressure arising from ever increasing demand for fuelwood, fodder and timber, lack of preventive measures and diversion of forest lands to non-forest uses without compensatory afforestation and environmental safeguards. Shifting cultivation is affecting the environment and productivity of land adversely. He is therefore, of the opinion that efforts should be made to contain such cultivation by propagating improved agricultural practices. Social forestry and energy plantation should also be encouraged.

G. Kumar in his paper observed that the research out-put in Geography has markedly increased at the National level in the recent past. Despite this development, the Indian geographers are still hesitant to undertake research studies on spatial implications of policy decisions which sometimes transform the cultural and economic geography of people and place. He is of the opinion that the prevailing situations in North-East India are not exactly congenial to conduct individual pursuits in research areas. He called upon the geographers to come forward for a better interaction with other Social Science disciplines to make research more meaningful especially in those studies related to resource allocations. His paper lists the different areas of research priorities suitable for North-East

situation. R.K. Satpathy's paper mentioned that very few researchers have studied the problems in Political Science as far as Mizoram is concerned. This is of course, debatable. He sets his priority areas like behavioural studies, political sociology and international affairs. Satpathy has also mentioned some of the practical constraints in undertaking research studies in Mizoram like library facilities, financial support, etc. and requested the various administrative agencies to put an all-out effort to remove these constraints.

In his paper, S. Jawaid first dealt with the concept of research. He observed that the changing economic policies of the country need thorough analysis. Administrative drawbacks are the main reasons for social agitation, opined Jawaid. Therefore, he is of the opinion that emphasis should be given to the mobilisation of the existing and newly available resources to achieve the developmental goal. His paper also highlighted some areas which are required to be taken up as priority areas of research. He further suggested that both the academicians and practitioners of the discipline of Public Administration in Mizoram should come forward to form a joint committee to encourage further researches on the existing projects and recommend new ones for an all-round development of the State.

Siddhartha Ganguly in his paper observed that in a country like India where education of masses plays a very important role, language education automatically becomes an integral part of the whole programme, because through language knowledge and information are transmitted and acquired. Thus language education becomes more imperative in order to translate the available information in all the spoken languages to reach the masses. He also suggested two approaches that may be followed for the teaching-learning of a second language in the Indian set-up, namely—grammar translation and exposure. In the context of North-East India, he finds that the curriculum planning is basically faulty so much so that the learners find it difficult to establish the second language either linguistically or culturally, implying an inappropriate relationship between the reader and the text. He emphasises that research in language teaching should have the primary priority to find an approach, which can take care

of the lack of opportunities for exposure to reality and yet develop a reasonable proficiency in the language. He also develops various conceptual approaches from the historical perspective and tries to isolate the hindering factors in proficiency. He is of the opinion that researches on second language teaching should concentrate on two aspects—firstly, identifying the needs of the learners group and secondly, developing a proper curriculum accordingly.

The last paper is jointly authored by Kalyan Adak and A. Das Gupta. They are of the opinion that research needs to highlight appropriate policies for promoting welfare. They listed the problems of research in Mizoram—two of which are the absence of adequate information and authentic data as well as the poor response from respondents while collecting field data. The paper deals mostly with the problems and constraints of research than setting up of a list of priority areas for research.

The discussions that followed after the presentation of the papers were lively ones. Many more issues and problems relating to research on and about Mizoram were raised during this one-day Panel Discussion. It is felt that in the near future such Panel Discussions should be held frequently in order to mobilise the teachers, researchers and others interested in this field so as to bring more interaction among the academicians and other field and social workers in the North-Eastern region.

I take this opportunity to acknowledge my heartfelt gratitude to the Indian Council of Social Science Research—North-Eastern Regional Centre, Shillong for giving me this opportunity to edit this volume. I hope the volume will arouse more interest in the minds and thoughts of researchers of Mizoram in particular and North-East India in general.

July, 2001
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L.S. GASSAH
Editor

INDIAN COUNCIL OF SOCIAL SCIENCE RESEARCH NORTH-EASTERN REGIONAL CENTRE

Upper Nongthymmai, Shillong, Meghalaya

The Indian Council of Social Science Research (ICSSR) is an autonomous organisation established by the Government of India in 1969, engaged in promoting research in social sciences.

The Council has set up six Regional Centres at Shillong, Calcutta, Chandigarh, Bombay, Delhi, and Hyderabad as part of its programme of decentralising administration and broadbasing social science research. The main roles of Regional Centre are: to act as the agent of the ICSSR within the region; to act as the representative of the social scientists of the region and to bring their ideas and problems to the ICSSR; to provide a platform for the social scientists of the region to come together for promotion of social science research and to serve as the link between the social scientists of the region and the national and international community of the social scientists.

The North-Eastern Regional Centre covers all the eight states of the region—Assam, Arunachal Pradesh, Manipur, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Nagaland, Tripura, and Sikkim. The main objectives of the NERC are: (i) to render essential bibliographical and documentation service for research work; (ii) to organise or to assist the organisation of Seminars, Workshops, Research Methodology Courses, Conferences, at different Universities, Colleges, and other Institutions in North-East; (iii) to award Study Grant for research scholars in order to collect data in the Libraries in North-East; (iv) to organise Lectures by distinguished scholars; and (v) to disseminate information about the programme of the ICSSR.

NERC has a Library-cum-Documentation Analysis Unit exclusively on studies related to the social, political, cultural and economic affairs of North-Eastern Region. At present it has a collection of around 3000 books on various social science disciplines and about 500 unpublished Seminar, Symposia, Conference and Workshop proceedings sponsored by the NERC. It has also more than 1000 collections of occasional papers from different research institutions.

The Centre as a part of its documentation and bibliographical services has compiled major bibliographies on academic material presented in Seminars and Conferences sponsored by the NERC, Journal maintained in eminent libraries of the North-Eastern Region, dissertations and articles on North-East. It has published NERC Annual Lecture Series (priced) and Special Lecture Series (unpriced).

The Chairman of the NERC is the Head of the Organisation and the Honorary Director, as its Executive Head. The Deputy Director is responsible for the day-to-day administration and management of the activities of the NERC under the guidance of the Honorary Director.

Further information may be obtained from the Deputy Director, North-Eastern Regional Centre, Indian Council of Social Science Research, Upper Nongthymmai, Shillong 793 014, Meghalaya.

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