



INTERIM REPORT

# MIZORAM FIGHTS



# COVID-19



Task Group on Documentation  
GOVERNMENT OF MIZORAM

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## **FOREWARD**

In the face of uncertainty on how long the lockdown on normal life will be necessitated due to COVID-19 pandemic, it is felt that an interim report of the Task Group on Documentation should be published to highlight the initiative of the Government of Mizoram and the many exemplary deeds shown by the civil society in combating the spread of COVID-19 in the State. It is hoped that the interim report will provide an insight into the situation and also share best practices implemented in the State.

We believe that the unity and cooperation among all concerned, including the Government, NGOs, the public at large and individual citizens displayed during this ongoing crisis has been instrumental in curbing the spread of COVID-19 in Mizoram. We take this opportunity to laude the services and sacrifices of public servants and the civil society in this time of crisis and hope that an even brighter picture emerges at the time when a full report is prepared.

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## Task Group on Documentation

(Notified vide B.13021/103/2020-DMR/Pt.II dated 12.4.2020)

Sl.	NAME	DESIGNATION
1	Dr. C. Vanlalramsanga, Secretary to the Govt. of Mizoram, Planning & Programme Implementation Dept.	: Chairman
2	Dr. Lalrinchhana, Director, Dte. of Economics & Statistics.	: Member
3	Pi Lalbiakthansangi, Dy. Director, Dte. of Economics & Statistics.	: Member
4	Dr. Lalchhuanawma, Dy. Director, Dte. of Health Services.	: Member
5	Pu Lalduata, Asst. Director (Ops), Disaster Management & Rehabilitation Dept.	: Member
6	Pu Pratap Chhetri, IPRO, Information & Public Relations Dept.	: Member
7	Pu Isak Lalmuanpuia Chuaungo, Economist-cum-Under Secretary, Planning & Programme Implementation Dept.	: Member Secretary



## I. OVERVIEW

India reported its first COVID-19 positive case on 30th January, even though some protective measures such as thermal screening of passengers arriving from China were initiated since 21st January. . The fact that Myanmar shares its boundary with China, which then, was the epicentre and the origin of the virus outbreak was not taken lightly by the Government of Mizoram.

The meeting suggested setting up a Task Force to deal with COVID-19 and put in place protective measures, the primary measure being screening of passengers. The Task Force was set up the same day. Screening of travelers entering Mizoram from Myanmar was started at the Indo-Myanmar border at Zokhawthar in Champhai District from 4th February while passengers arriving at Lengpui Airport were screened from 6th February onwards.

“On 30th January 2020, a meeting to discuss the COVID-19 scenario and make a strategy to combat the entry of the virus was held and State Level Task Force under the Chairmanship of Chief Secretary was established on the same day”

This was at a time, when screening was done at just three international airports in the country and perhaps, then screening had not commenced at any of the international boundaries. Mizoram was way ahead in taking precautionary measures by screening international arrivals and air passengers.

Meanwhile the first case of home quarantine in the state was reported by the Chief Secretary at a meeting of State Level Co-ordination Committee on Zoonotic Diseases held on 6th February 2020. The Chief Secretary reported that 5 people who had returned from China had been quarantined at home on precautionary grounds even though they did not show any symptoms of COVID-19. Samples of three persons from this group sent for testing all turned out negative. In this regard too, Mizoram took quarantine of any suspected cases seriously from the start itself.

It may also be mentioned that the Health & Family Welfare Department issued the first appeal regarding COVID-19 on 27th January 2020. The appeal was issued

after a nationwide video-conferencing on COVID-19 chaired by Shrimati Preeti Sudan, Secretary, Ministry of Health & Family Welfare, Government of India which was attended by official and doctors from the State Rapid Response Team, Zoram Medical College, Civil Hospital Aizawl and Integrated Diseases Surveillance Programme. The appeal educated the public on health measures and hygienic practices including hand washing and use of sanitisers.

“During February when the country did not see any significant rise in the number of COVID-19 cases, Mizoram was on a preparedness mode to fight COVID-19”

During February when the country did not see any significant rise in the number of COVID-19 cases, Mizoram was on a preparedness mode to fight COVID-19. This was done through trainings and interventional education of all levels of healthcare professionals and workers in the state. Discussions were also held with Non-Governmental Organizations, civil society, church leaders and representatives of elected local bodies regarding awareness about the pandemic and dissemination of information on COVID-19. District Task Forces on COVID-19 which were formed in all the 11 Districts undertook the task of preparing planning with respect to COVID-19 mitigation and initiated a number of protective measures. They deliberated on border screenings, mass education and awareness programmes, especially in border villages, medical, quarantine and isolation facilities and made concrete decisions in this regard.

The first case of COVID-19 in the state was announced by the Health & Family Welfare Minister in a very transparent manner in a press conference on the 25th January where he and other officials of the Department took a number of questions from the press. The patient was under strict home quarantine after he arrived from the Netherlands on 16th March. Since stringently adhered to all aspects of quarantine, he

did not transmit the infection to any of his family members who were also isolated once he was confirmed positive.

“Mizoram was the first North-Eastern state to airlift protective equipment such as PPEs and masks”

Mizoram was the first North-Eastern state to airlift protective equipment such as PPEs and masks. Even though the equipments were procured in Delhi there was a problem with transporting it. Chief Minister Pu Zoramthanga took up the matter with Home Minister Shri Amit Shah and was able to arrange a chartered Air India special flight to transport the goods. The cargo reached Aizawl by a special chartered Air India flight on 27th March.

Mizoram was also among the first states to announce a Lockdown for containment of COVID-19 on 21st March from 22nd March to 29th March before the 21 days National Lockdown was announced by the Prime Minister.

## II. THREE TIER SYSTEM OF COVID CONTAINMENT TASK FORCES

### 1. State Level Task Force for Mitigation of COVID-19

The Government notified the constitution of State Level Task Force for Mitigation of COVID-19 on 30<sup>th</sup> January 2020 under the Chairmanship of the Secretary Health & Family Welfare. After the COVID-19 situation changed and it became a global pandemic, the composition of this Task Force was expanded with the Chief Secretary as the Chairman via a re-notification of the Task Force by the Government on 9<sup>th</sup> March 2020. The State Level Task Force is constantly monitoring the over-all situation on a daily basis with State Control Room set up for this purpose and manned 24x7.

Further, the Government notified various Task Groups, each headed by a Secretary, to look into various aspects and situations that arose and had to be dealt due to the Lockdown. These are -

- (i) **Task Group on Transportation and Commodities** chaired by Commissioner & Secretary Food Civil Supplies and Consumer Affairs (formed by merging Task Group on Transport and Task Force on Essential Commodities).
- (ii) **Task Group on Medicine & Medical Equipments** chaired by Secretary, Health & Family Welfare Department.
- (iii) **Task Group on Migrant Workers and Stranded Travellers** chaired by Addl. Secretary, Home Department.
- (iv) **Task Group on Insurance** chaired by Addl. Secretary, Finance Department.
- (v) **Task Group on Animal Husbandry & Veterinary Services and Fisheries** chaired by Secretary, AH & Vety, Department
- (vi) **Task Group on Quarantine Facilities** chaired by Commissioner & Secretary, School Education Department.
- (vii) **Task Group on Documentation** chaired by Secretary, Planning & Programme Implementation Department.
- (viii) **Task Group on Media & Publicity** chaired by Secretary, I&PR Department.



- (ix) **Task Group on Agricultural Input** chaired by Commissioner & Secretary, Agriculture Department.
- (x) **Task Group on Direct Benefit Transfer** chaired by Secretary Finance.
- (xi) **Task Group on International/State Boundaries** chaired by DGP, Mizoram.

Various other Committees were set up such as **Committee for Promotion of Locally Manufactured Protective Gears** chaired by Secretary, Planning & Programme Implementation Department, **COVID-19 Medical Operational Team** chaired by MLA and Vice Chairman of Health & Family Welfare Board etc.



## 2. District Level Task Force for Mitigation of COVID-19

District Level Task Forces were soon formed in all Districts in the first week of February. They deliberated on border screenings, mass education and awareness programmes, especially in border villages, medical, quarantine and isolation facilities and made concrete decisions in this regard. District authorities of Champhai, Mamit and Lunglei Districts conducted awareness in the 3<sup>rd</sup> week of February targeted at Gram Sabhas and school children. IEC materials were distributed and video clips on hygienic practices and symptoms of COVID-19 were shown.



The State Level Task Force and District Level Task Forces have been issuing advisories, lockdown guidelines, containment measures and notifications for the public.

### **3. Local Level Task Force for Mitigation of COVID-19**

Local Level/Village Level Task Forces which function under the District Level Task Forces have been crucial in the implementation of



Lockdown Guidelines and adherence to COVID-19 containment measures.

Task Forces at the community level which includes Local Council (Panchayat) representatives and NGO representatives have been formed in all localities. In all, 754 nos. of LLTFs/VLTFs are operational across Mizoram.

These Task Forces are strictly monitoring all home quarantine cases of people, even who are otherwise healthy but have arrived from other countries and states in the last two weeks, for a period of 14 days. They are also monitoring availability of essential items and prices of goods. Announcements in this regard are being made by the Task Forces over public address systems in localities.

The Disaster Management and Rehabilitation Department on 27th March issued Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) for the guidance of Local Level Task Forces/Village Level Task Forces on COVID-19 at the village and locality (within the jurisdiction of Aizawl Municipal Corporation) levels so as to ensure uniformity in their mode of operations and to increase their efficiency and effectiveness. Village/Local Level Task Forces had been formed on 18 March in all the villages of Mizoram and localities of Aizawl City and they are at the forefront working in close collaboration with the district authorities, law enforcing agencies and food and civil supplies officials.

### III. PRE-LOCKDOWN CONTAINMENT MEASURES

#### 1. Medical Screening at Lengpui Airport, International Borders and Inter State Borders

Screening at Lengpui Airport, international border points and inter-state exit-entry points was initiated much before the Government of India started screening nationwide in the all the airports.



On 4<sup>th</sup> February 2020, Medical Screening of travellers for COVID-19 at Zokhawthar, Champhai District on the Indo Myanmar border and at Lengpui Airport was commenced. Travel history of the persons was recorded in a Self-Declaration Form for easy follow-up in case such need arose and screening for COVID-19 symptoms was done.

On the border with Tripura at Kanhmun, Medical Screening of people crossing the border was commenced from 17<sup>th</sup> February (Mamit District). Screening on the Indo-Bangladesh border commenced from 10<sup>th</sup> February 2020 at Kawrpuichhuah and from 19<sup>th</sup> February 2020 at Tlabung (Lunglei District).





While screening at the Assam-Mizoram inter-state border at Vairengte and Bairabi were started from 12<sup>th</sup> February (Kolasib District). At Saisihchhuah on the Indo Myanmar border in Lawngtlai District, medical screening commenced from the first week of March.



## 2. Closing of International Borders and Inter-state borders

The international borders with Myanmar and Bangladesh were closed in the first week of March 2020. Entry through inter-state border points only in four locations, i.e., Bairabi and Vairengte for Assam; Khankawn for Manipur and Kanhmun for Tripura borders were allowed and the rest of inter-state borders entry points were sealed from 9<sup>th</sup> March 2020 onwards.

All passenger vehicles were instructed to record details of all passengers for contact tracing.



### 3. Closing of Educational Institutions, Churches and Public Places

All educational institutions and public places were closed from 16<sup>th</sup> March onwards and any kind of mass gatherings were banned from the same date.

Churches bodies on their own suspended all religious services and gatherings by the 2<sup>nd</sup> week of March 2020 en masse without the Government having to notify the closure of such places.

“All educational institutions and public places were closed from 16th March onwards and any kind of mass gatherings were banned from the same date.”

Mizoram Legislative Assembly suspended all Assembly Committee sittings from 17<sup>th</sup> March 2020 onwards. The Budget Session which was held February and ended in the first week of March proved a valuable foresight since all budget business and matters could be deliberated by the law makers.



### 4. Passing of Legislative Ordinance for COVID-19 Containment

The Governor gave his assent to ‘**The Mizoram Epidemic (COVID-19) Regulations, 2020**’ which was drafted in line with 'The Epidemic Diseases Act 1897' for COVID-19 containment in the interest of public health and safety. The Regulation came into force from the 18<sup>th</sup> March 2020 onwards.

### 5. Government Institutional Quarantine and Isolation Facilities

All District Administrations operationalized institutional quarantine and isolation facilities by the third week of March 2020. District Disaster Management Authorities were well prepared to handle any COVID-19 cases.



## 6. Early Monitoring by the Government

Emergency meeting with council of Ministers, Govt. Officials and NGOs on Prevention of Coronavirus disease (COVID-19) outbreak was being held at the Chief Minister's Conference Hall on 9<sup>th</sup> March,2020 reviewing the preparedness of the state and held extensive discussions on containment measures and .



#### IV. RUN UP TO LOCKDOWN

- (i) Deputy Commissioner, Aizawl promulgated CrPC 144 prohibiting the assembly of more than 5 persons at a place from 21<sup>st</sup> April 2020 onwards by invoking Clause 11 of The Mizoram Epidemic Diseases (CoVID-19) Regulation-2020. Other Districts followed suit prohibiting the assembly of more than 10 persons at a place.
- (ii) Rostering Guidelines for government employees to be followed by Heads of Departments/Heads of Offices and Advisory for Government Offices was issued by General Administration Department on 20<sup>th</sup> March 2020 (Annexure I)
- (iii) The State Task Force which met late afternoon on 21<sup>st</sup> March 2020 recommended one week partial lockdown of Mizoram with effect from 23<sup>rd</sup> March 2020 till 29<sup>th</sup> March 2020. The Council of Ministers headed by the Chief Minister accepted the recommendations on the same day itself. Mizoram was amongst the first states to implement “Lockdown” before the announcement of nationwide Lockdown from 25<sup>th</sup> March 2020 by the Prime Minister
- (iv) The Mizoram Board of School Education (MBSE) postponed all examinations and evaluations related to Higher Secondary School Leaving Certificate Examination (HSSLC) 2020 till further notice on 22<sup>nd</sup> March 2020.
- (v) Advisory and Guidelines to be followed during the Partial Lockdown was issued by the Government on 22<sup>nd</sup> March 2020(Annexure II)
- (vi) In view of the evolving situation of the pandemic COVID-19 nationwide then, a notification ordering the closure of the state's lone airport - Lengpui Airport with effect from 23:59 hours of 23<sup>rd</sup> March 2020(Monday) till further orders was issued late in the evening of 23<sup>rd</sup> March 2020. This was a day ahead of the Ministry of Civil Aviation order for the closure of all airports nationwide with effect from 25<sup>th</sup> March 2020 onwards.
- (vii) A meeting held under the Chairmanship of Health & Family Welfare Minister which was attended by 5 MLAs and microbiologists explored the

possibility of setting up a COVID-19 Testing Laboratory at the earliest. The meeting mooted using the space at Zoram Medical College and sourcing the equipment on lien from Mizoram University and Pachhunga University College.

- (viii) The Government notified setting up of a Core Committee on Setting up of COVID-19 Testing Laboratory in Mizoram to be headed by the Secretary, Health & Family
- (ix) The Deputy Chief Minister who holds the portfolio of Public Health Engineering Department and the Power & Electricity Minister reviewed the preparedness of their respective Departments in ensuring water and power supply to the people.

## V. CONTAINMENT MEASURES DURING LOCKDOWN

### a) COVID-19 Operational Medical Team

State Referral Hospital – Zoram Medical College, Falkawn, Mizoram was designated as COVID-19 Isolation and Treatment Centre with immediate effect from 25th

March 2020. The setting up of COVID-19 Medical

Operational Team was notified with Dr. ZR Thiamsanga, MLA and Vice Chairman of Health & Family Welfare Board to look into the specific needs with respect to COVID-19 treatment protocols and the medical and technical requirements thereof. The Operational Team has travelled across the state to assess the requirements and the status of District Hospitals and other facilities.



Under the Medical Operational Team, the following are also functional–

- Mental Health on COVID-19 consisting of practicing psychiatrists to address depression and other mental issues arising as a result of extended stay at home.
- Physicians Group on COVID-19 comprising of physicians and other specialists.
- Committee on Psychological and Social Guidance to give counseling and guidance to students experiencing mental stress and depression.
- Sub-Committee on Dead Body Management and its related issues.

### b) COVID-19 Mobile Application

Mizoram was one of the first states to develop a mobile application for COVID-19 awareness and information. The ICT Department launched the **mCOVID-19** mobile application on 3<sup>rd</sup> April 2020. The mobile app features latest updates and trends on COVID-19 in Mizoram, India and the world,

helpline numbers, Quarantine Monitor akin to the Arogya Setu app; contribution/aid for COVID-19; registration and networking for various Task Forces; relevant and informative videos on COVID-19



in the local language, registration of COVID-19 volunteers. The mobile app has recently integrated **mPASS**, an online registration and declaration for vehicles carrying essential and non-essential goods and permission for vehicles carrying non-essential commodities. This will ensure easy tracking of drivers and vehicles and also lessen the time for checking at the border crossing points.

#### **c) Quarantine Procedures**

The first case of home quarantine in the state was reported by the Chief Secretary at a meeting of State Level Co-ordination Committee on Zoonotic Diseases held on 6<sup>th</sup> February 2020. The Chief Secretary reported that 5 people who had returned from China had been quarantined at home on precautionary grounds even though they did not show any symptoms of COVID-19. Samples of three persons from this group sent for testing all turned out negative. All persons under home quarantine were under strict surveillance by the Task Forces and government medical authorities.

#### **d) Contact Tracing of travellers who travelled with the first COVID-19 positive case**

The first positive case of COVID-19 was confirmed on 25th March 2020. Immediately, contact tracing of all who came into contact with the patient were identified in just 2 days and rigorous follow up of home quarantine of the contacts was done due to which none of those who came into contact tested positive. All the family members were isolated and tests returned negative.



Mizoram Police also undertook stringent review of the *Tablighi Markaz* case and it was found after thorough investigation that no one from Mizoram attended the event.

**e) Establishment of COVID-19 Testing Laboratory**

At the onset of the pandemic, Mizoram did not have a COVID-19 Laboratory and all samples were sent to the testing laboratories in Kolkata, Guwahati or Silchar. This crucial gap needed to be filled since in the ensuing days transportation of samples and conformation of results would be a Herculean task.

- f) A meeting held under the Chairmanship of Health & Family Welfare Minister which was attended by 5 MLAs and microbiologists on the 23rd March explored the possibility of setting up a COVID-19 Testing Laboratory at the earliest. The meeting mooted using the space at Zoram Medical College, Falkawn and sourcing the equipment on lien from Mizoram University and Pachhunga University College.
- g) The Core Committee on Setting up of COVID-19 Testing Laboratory in Mizoram headed by the Secretary, Health & Family Department pursued the matter diligently and by 7th April the RT PCR COVID-19 Testing Laboratory was functional after ICMR accorded recognition and the first samples were tested the same day.

## VI. INNOVATIVE & BEST PRACTICES

### 1. Local Level Task Forces/ Village Level Task Forces

Mizoram is a very cohesive state where community led initiatives have always led the way forward, supplementing the efforts of the Government. With the COVID-19 pandemic, the story is no different. The Local Task Forces were constituted soon after the State Level Task Force for the Mitigation of COVID-19 was enlarged and its scope broadened.



As already mentioned earlier, the members of these Local Task Forces are drawn from elected representatives of local bodies (Village Councils in the villages and Local Councils with the jurisdiction of Aizawl Municipal Corporation) and representatives of NGOs like the ‘Young Mizo Association’, ‘Mizoram Upa Pawl’ (the elders association) and ‘Mizoram Hmeichhe Insuihkhawm Pawl’ (the women’s association) and also representatives from the local churches. In all, 754 nos. of LLTFs/VLTFs are operational across Mizoram. They are the third and grassroots tier COVID-19 containment agency.

Since the Lockdown, Task Forces have been at the forefront working with law enforcing

“Since the Lockdown, Village/ Local Task Forces have been at the forefront working with law enforcing agencies to implement the Lockdown successfully”

agencies to implement the Lockdown successfully. Thousands of volunteers have been on vigil 24x7 to enforce the lockdown. Due to their relentless efforts, there have been hardly any violators of the Lockdown. In fact, no case of Lockdown violation has been registered.

The Task Forces have ensured the supply of essential commodities in the villages/localities by equitable distribution of goods. In the first phase of the Lockdown, when shops and essential services were closed, they undertook home deliveries of essential commodities and vegetables making use of PA (Public Address) systems and social messaging platforms like Whatsapp. Relevant information circulated on local Whatsapp groups has helped quell the spread of rumours and fake news.

Local Task Forces also ensured that people who reached Mizoram a week before the Lockdown stayed in home quarantine and often checked whether they adhered to all guidelines of home quarantine. Once their period of quarantine was over, they issued certificate of quarantine.

In the second phase of the Lockdown, Task Forces oversaw the staggered opening of shops and fixed timings for the opening of shops ensuring social distancing and use of masks. Along with the Police, they undertake checking on the roads to see whether people have proper permission of movement.

People on their own contributed financially to the Task Forces. Instances of young children as young as five years old donating their money from their piggy banks have surfaced across the state. These funds were used to provide rations and essential commodities to daily wage workers and other needy people within their areas. Such funds have provided for the needy without governmental support to a large extent.

## 2. Vegetable & Fruit Supply Chain

The Vegetable & Fruit Supply Chain was developed by the Chief Minister who holds the Horticulture Department portfolio. Under this system, the Horticulture Department procures vegetables directly from the farmers and sells it



Task Forces on a no loss no profit basis with the help the of Commerce & Industries Department and the public sector undertaking MIZOFED. The Task Forces in turn sell them to the people through home deliveries or on designated days of the week at adequately open places within their localities where social distancing can be ensured.

In these times where farmers cannot sell their produce and people cannot buy vegetables from the market, this initiative has proved a boon for both. Farmers are getting a decent price for their crops since the middlemen are eliminated. People on the other hand are ensured a steady supply of vegetables and local fruits.

The Vegetable & Fruit Supply Chain has been successfully operating in Aizawl city and the District Headquarters from 28<sup>th</sup> March till date. Aizawl has been divided in 12 Zones, and a Zonal Officer oversees the distribution to Task Forces under his purview. More than 152 trips of



vegetables and fruits have since reached the people of Aizawl. Apart from this 78 LLTFs operating in Aizawl have on their own procured vegetables and fruits 127 times. Villages have donated vegetables to Orphanages, corrective homes and hospitals (total 16 nos.) 21 times. Since its inception, the Vegetable & Fruit Supply Chain have procured vegetables to the tune of Rs. 1,00,10,013/- and Rs. 94,34,997/- have been realized from the sale of the produce.





### 3. Border Guarding by Village Level Task Forces

Mizoram shares more than 700 kilometres of international boundaries with Myanmar and Bangladesh and also more than 500 kilometres of inter-state boundaries with Assam, Tripura and Manipur. Since the COVID pandemic, law enforcing agencies have been guarding the designated check points. While the Indo-Bangladesh border is fenced the Indo-Myanmar border is porous and there are many as 54





crossing points across the border with Myanmar. With the manpower of the law enforcing agencies stretched it is not possible to man all such points. The VLLTs have taken upon themselves to guard such points 24x7 voluntarily so that no one crosses the border. Such initiatives have also been taken villages on the inter-state boundaries.

Task Forces from Aizawl have sent rations and other essential items to the volunteers keeping vigil on the borders and visited them to boost their morale. Storms which hit Mizoram a week back have not deterred their spirits even when their make-shift camps were blown away. They are alert as ever.

#### **4. Screening at Border Check Points**

On 4<sup>th</sup> February 2020, Medical Screening of travellers for COVID-19 at Zokhawthar, Champhai District on the Indo Myanmar border and at Lengpui Airport was commenced. Travel history of the persons was recorded in a Self-Declaration Form for easy follow-up in case such need arose and screening for COVID-19 symptoms was done. On the border with Tripura at Kanhmun, Medical Screening of people crossing the border was commenced from 17<sup>th</sup> February 2020 (Mamit District). Screening on the Indo-Bangladesh border commenced from 10<sup>th</sup> February 2020 at Kawrpuichhuah and from 19<sup>th</sup> February 2020 at Tlabung (Lunglei District). While screening at the Assam-Mizoram inter-state border at Vairengte and Bairabi were started from 12<sup>th</sup> February 2020 (Kolasib District). At Saisihchhuah on the Indo Myanmar border in Lawngtlai District, medical screening commenced from the first week of March.

Screening at Lengpui Airport, international border points and inter-state exit-entry points was initiated much before the Government of India started screening nationwide in the airports.

#### **5. Welfare Measures by Mizoram Construction and Other Workers' Welfare Board**

The Mizoram Construction and Other Workers has undertaken a number of measures such as providing a one-time cash assistance of Rs. 3000/- to the members. AAY and BPL worker families have been provided free rations for a month as well.

## 6. Use of Public Announcement System

The Local Task Forces made extensive use of the Public Announcement system installed in every locality in Mizoram for maintaining the lockdown and ensuring safety against the pandemic. The significance of PA(Public Address) system in Mizo society harkens back to the traditional use of village crier or ‘**tlangau**’ to make public pronouncements on behalf of the village chieftain, which has effectually carried over to modern times. During the lockdowns, the PA system is being used for educational purposes such as providing safety instructions on safeguards against COVID-19 infection, and also for enforcement of curfew/lockdown by communicating official regulations issued by the Government at the State level and on local Do’s and Don’ts enforced by the Local Task Forces. The distribution of essential commodities at the locality level was also coordinated through the use of PA system.

## 7. Solid Waste Management amid COVID-19

The current pandemic of the novel coronavirus, COVID-19, brings serious challenges regarding municipal waste management practices and procedures. The UN Environment Programme urged governments to treat waste management as an urgent and essential public service in order to minimise possible secondary impacts upon health and the environment. The protection of waste management workers and the containment of the COVID19 spread are our highest priority. As such, the Urban Development and Poverty Alleviation Department, Government of Mizoram renders an all out effort to ensure the safety of the community and our frontline sanitation workers.



In Aizawl City, the Capital of Mizoram, waste collection and transportation is the responsibility of Aizawl Municipal Corporation. After careful inspection, the segregated waste from each household and localities are collected, and transported to

the Aizawl Solid Waste Management Centre to be further treated and managed by the State Investment Program Management and Implementation Unit (SIPMIU).

The Dry and Wet wastes which are brought to the Resource Recovery Centre are treated with disinfectant first and then left for a period of 3 to 5 days to ensure inactivation of pathogens before further processing by sanitary workers, who are protected with full Personal Protective Equipments (PPE).

The health and well being of our sanitary workers is our top priority. The workers at the Centre are well informed and are given thorough training for their safety and hygiene. Even before the Covid-19 pandemic, it was a normal practice for the workers to use masks and gloves. They are also instructed to take bath 3 times a day, especially prior to leaving the centre. They are also instructed to maintain personal hygiene. Separate bathrooms are provided for men and women. Smoking is strictly prohibited within the Centre. After the Covid-19 pandemic, additional care has been taken by disinfecting the waste, and mandatory wearing of Personal Protective Equipments for the workers.



As necessary precautions and measures are taken with regards to their safety, it is overwhelming to mention that the sanitary workers continue to work whole heartedly amidst the Covid-19 pandemic crisis.

## **8. Observance of Religious Functions with Social Distancing**

The freedom to practice one's own religion and commune with those of similar faith is a fundamental aspect of many societies, with Mizoram being no exception. Despite this, due to the necessity to avoid any form of gathering as a crucial precautionary measure against COVID-19, the churches of the State took the initiative to self-regulate their cherished activities and stopped congregation of churchgoers as early as 22<sup>nd</sup> March 2020, even before the Government issued an official directive to

“The churches of the State took the initiative to self-regulate their cherished activities and stopped congregation of churchgoers as early as 22nd March 2020”

close down all religious functions. The churches also came up with innovative ways to continue worship services while maintaining social distancing, such as through preaching of sermons through the local PA systems and through television programmes. In an ordinary year, the observance of one of the most important occasions for Christians, Palm

Sunday (which falls on the last Sunday before Easter), would start with Christians taking to the streets early in the morning and hailing Jesus Christ and reciting verses from the Bible. Even this fateful year, Christians of the State continued observing Palm Sunday by hailing the Christ each from his or her own balconies, roof tops and courtyards with the knowledge that although the believers cannot congregate in body nevertheless they remain united in Spirit. A video with Hindi narration can be viewed here – <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zahztJK9NoU> .





## 9. Fit Mizoram Movement

The Government of Mizoram has initiated a motivational drive to popularize home fitness amidst the lockdown. It is a continuation of the Fit Mizoram Programme launched on 22<sup>nd</sup> March, 2019 which was 5 months before the nationwide launch of Fit India Movement by the Prime Minister. A motivational video is aired regularly on the local cable channels featuring eminent heads of the State such as the Governor, the Chief Minister, Minister for Sports & Youth Services, and sport personalities of the State from various sports disciplines showing their at-home exercise routines. The video even features seasoned politicians from the opposition party who express their solidarity with the movement.



The motivational video can be viewed here – <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OnP2YnUa8to> .

## 10. Production of PPE by Voluntary Groups

The spread of coronavirus disease resulted in an inadequate supply of Personal Preventive Equipment (PPE) such as PPE suits, gowns, disinfectant, sanitizer, masks, etc. Procurement of readymade PPE from outside by retailers was also hampered due to restrictions on movement of goods. Even the Government at one time was hard pressed to obtain sufficient equipments and materials. To address this gap, the civil society (NGOs and Volunteer groups) have come forward on their own volition to



manufacture these requirements and supply them to Local Task Force, Police, Hospitals, etc. absolutely free of cost. About 37 different voluntary groups and entrepreneurs involving more than 200 volunteers are currently operating in different corners of the State. The volume of PPE equipment produced and distributed by these groups till the first week of April 2020 is as under:-

- (i) Mask – 15772
- (ii) PPE (full set) – 192
- (iii) PPE (in parts) – 210
- (iv) Hand sanitiser - 762 ltrs
- (v) Disinfectant - 480 ltrs
- (vi) Gown – 426
- (vii) Suit - 222



With the gradual lack of raw materials beginning to slow the volume of production, the Disaster Management & Rehabilitation Department of the State has stepped in to procure the required materials from outside for the use of these voluntary groups.

## 11. Voluntary contributions by State Government Departments

Donations have been received by the Government from concerned citizens, associations, NGO's etc. for the Chief Minister's Relief Fund for combating the COVID-19 pandemic. Not to be left behind, the public servants have voluntarily decided to contribute one day pay from their salaries to the Fund as a first step, displaying solidarity with the sections of the society who are worse off due to the lockdowns, and also in contributing not just their services but also their money in this Statewide effort to safeguard Mizoram from COVID-19.



## 12. COVID-19 Mobile Application

Mizoram was one of the first states to develop a mobile application for COVID-19 awareness and information. The ICT Department launched the mCOVID-19 mobile application on 3<sup>rd</sup> April. The mobile app features latest updates and trends on Covid-19 in Mizoram, India and the world, helpline numbers, Quarantine Monitor akin to the ArogyaSetu app; contribution/aid for COVID-19; registration and networking for various Task Forces; relevant and informative videos on COVID-19 in the local language, registration of COVID-19 volunteers.

“Mizoram was one of the first states to develop a mobile application, mCOVID-19 on 3rd April 2020”

The mobile app has recently integrated **mPASS**, an online registration and declaration for vehicles carrying essential and non-essential goods and permission for vehicles carrying non-essential commodities. This will ensure easy tracking of drivers and vehicles and also lessen the time for checking at the border crossing points.

## VII. SELFLESS SERVICE

On 11<sup>th</sup> April, the village of Sesawng in Aizawl District was hit by a storm where more than 80 houses were damaged; 21 of them being completely damaged. While on the 23<sup>rd</sup> April, a hailstorm, wherein hailstones the size of eggs damaged more than 300 houses in Hliappui village in Champhai District. In both these instances villagers from the neighbouring villages came sent out volunteers to help in relief efforts and in repairing houses.

“Another remarkable contribution is from the villages who have donated vegetables free of cost to localities in Aizawl City”

Another remarkable contribution is from the villages who have donated vegetables free of cost to localities in Aizawl city. More than 11 villages have donated 11 trips of vegetables to 11 localities in Aizawl free of cost. The villages selected the

localities by drawing lots. In return, Aizawl supplied PPE materials to the villages on the border.



Many individuals and groups have come forward in making masks and sewing PPE with available resources. These have been donated to hospitals and to members of Task Forces. The efforts of a 94 year old widow from Dawrpui locality who used her husband's pension amount to sew mask has inspired many to take up making of masks.



The story of Raphael who accompanied the mortal remains of his friend from Chennai to Aizawl by road covering a distance of 3357 kilometres amidst the Lockdown is a story of sheer humanity that must be mentioned.

## **Contributions to Chief Minister's Fund to Combat COVID-19**

As on 30<sup>th</sup> April 2020, contributions from individuals, groups, companies, government functionaries has totalled Rs.7,24,63,149. From this amount Rs. 5,46,71,065 has been given out to various Task Forces at the District Level and Local/Village levels and to the needy stranded students, medical patients and others who are stranded outside Mizoram. The Committee on Utilization of Chief Minister's Relief Fund for Covid-19 was set up under the chairmanship of Chief Secretary and this Committee deliberated.



## **VIII. CONCLUSION**

Mizoram has been able thus far to prevent an epidemic of COVID-19 within the State thanks to the consorted effort from all sections of the society. In all this, the leadership of the State have led the way by example, taking preemptive precautionary measures at the onset of the pandemic and swift follow up action for the safety of the State. A continued foresight from the leadership and healthy collaboration with the civil society will help the Government keep in touch with the ground realities and making sure that no section of the society is left out.



**GAD INSTRUCTIONS TO OFFICES TO IMPLEMENT ROSTER FOR WORKING FROM HOME FOR GROUP B, C AND D EMPLOYEES IN VIEW OF COVID-19**

In continuation with General Administration Department's Office Memorandum of even No.dated 19th March, 2020 and in line with Office Memorandum issued by the Government of India, Ministry of Personnel, Public Grievances and Pensions (Department of Personnel & Training) vide letter No. 11013/9/2014-Estt(A-III) dt. 19.3.2020, the following instructions are hereby issued for the well-being of employees of Government of Mizoram and in the interest of public health and safety.

1. Heads of Department (HoDs)/Heads of Office (HoOs) may ensure that 50 percent of Group B, C & D employees of Government of Mizoram are required to attend office every day, and the remaining 50 per cent staff should be instructed to work from home. All HoDs/HoOs are advised to draft a weekly roster of duty for Group B, C and D staff and ask them to attend office an alternate weeks. While deciding the roster for the first week, Heads of Department (HoDs)/Heads of Office (HoOs) are advised to include officials who are residing in close proximity to their office or use their own transport to travel to the offices.
2. The officials who are working from home on a particular day as per the roster drawn up should be available on telephone and electronic means of communication at all times. They should attend office, if called for any exigency of work.
3. Instruction should be issued to all Attached/Subordinate Offices, Autonomous/Statutory Bodies/Public Sector Undertakings by their respective Head of Departments and Administrative Head of Department.
4. These instructions shall not apply to the Offices and employees engaged in essential services viz. P&E, PHE, FCS&CA, H&FW, Excise & Narcotics Departments and emergency services viz. Fire & Emergency Services and those who are involved in traffic management, Law & Order and Departments/officials engaged in taking measures to prevent the spread of COVID-19.
5. These orders shall be applicable with immediate effect and will remain in force till 4th April, 2020

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### **ADVISORY TO BE FOLLOWED DURING PARTIAL SHUTDOWN**

Following yesterday's decision of the Government of Mizoram to enforce a partial shutdown of the state in the wake of the pandemic COVID-19, the Chief Secretary, Pu Lalnunmawia Chuaungo today held a briefing to address the concerns during the shutdown and coordinate efforts at various levels during the shutdown period of one week. Accordingly, the following advisory to be followed by public and government officials was finalized.

1. Movement of all public transport(buses, maxi-cabs, taxis and others) and private vehicles during the shutdown period is prohibited. Any movement of the public is also strictly prohibited and they are advised to remain indoors.
2. Except pharmacies and shops/businesses selling essential commodities and items of daily needs, all other shops and business establishments will remain closed. The Local Task Forces at the Local Council and Village Level will permit movement for buying of essential commodities within their jurisdiction. Such Task Forces are requested to identify the shops within their localities which are to remain open and make arrangements at their level for public to buy essential items within their jurisdiction.
3. Pharmacies/medicine shops will open and sell medicines as per the arrangements of Local Task Forces and the prescriptions of medical practitioners. Bulk buying/selling to individuals is prohibited.
4. The Government is making all necessary arrangements for continuation of transport of essential commodities to Mizoram from outside the state.
5. Only Government officials whose presence/need is absolutely required will attend offices. Secretaries/Heads of Departments/Heads of Offices will make necessary arrangements for attendance in government offices/establishments with minimal staff in this regard. The rest of the employees will work from home.
6. Government officials attending offices must invariably carry their IDs.
7. Only Banks dealing with government business will be open with minimal staff. Public transactions will not be entertained by banks. Public are requested to use ATMs and online banking and arrangements for the smooth functioning of the same must be ensured.
8. The Government will be constantly monitoring the prices of essential commodities and goods.

9. Lengpui Airport will function as usual, residents of Mizoram stuck outside the state and flying from other parts of the country will be permitted entry into Mizoram.
10. No wayside halts/stoppages or break of journeys are permitted for air passengers or road passengers. They must immediately without delay directly travel to their towns/villages and remain in home quarantine for 14 days. If they have no arrangements of vehicles for travelling to their final destinations, such persons will be quarantined in government designated quarantine facilities for a period of 14 days.
11. For picking up relatives/passengers from either the Airport or from state borders/boundaries, only the one driver per vehicle is allowed. The permission to such drivers will be given by the Task Forces at the Local Council and Village Level.
12. People who have no facilities/separate rooms for home quarantine must stay in government designated quarantine facilities.
13. People still stuck in other parts of the country who are yet to make arrangements for coming back to/reaching Mizoram are requested to remain in the places where they are currently staying.
14. Hostel owners who have quarantined students/inmates without any further addition of new inmates will continue running their hostels. They must not close down their hostels as of now.
15. Waste collection vehicles will continue plying as usual.
16. The Government is committed to helping any stranded passengers/people, if there are any or anyone facing difficulties due to the lockdown.

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