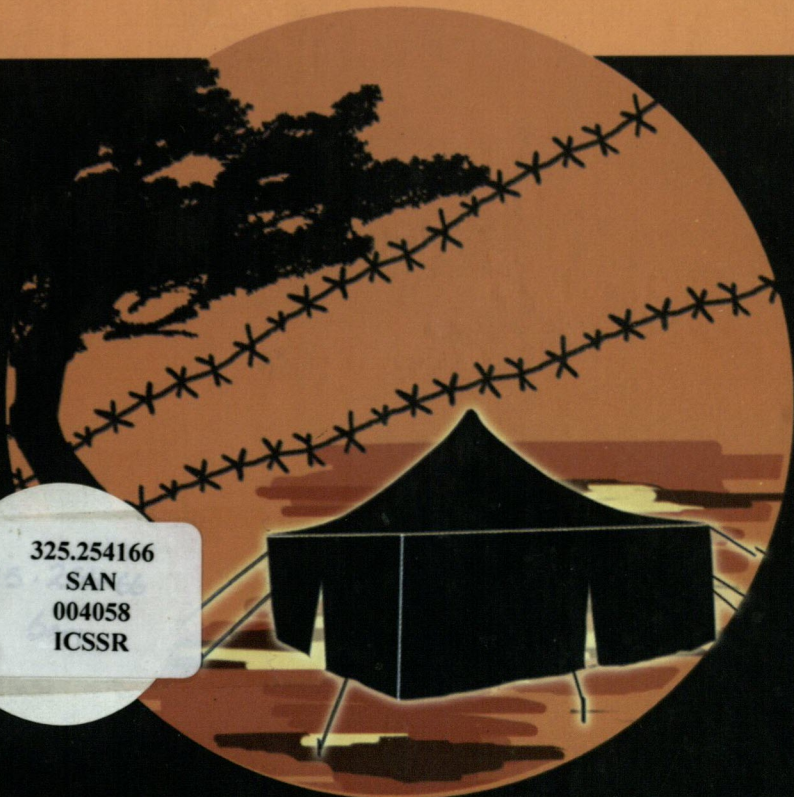


Editor Sangkima

# Cross-Border Migration

## MIZORAM



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The book is a complete work in the field of the study of infiltration of foreigners to Mizoram. Its focus is on the forces and factors which have encouraged the infiltrators to enter into the State.

Coming and settlement of Chakmas, Riangs, Gorkhas and Myanmarese and the impact on Mizoram are discussed in the volume. The book may be found useful for those who have interest in the subject and the region.

**Rs 350**  
**US\$ 35**

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**MIZORAM**

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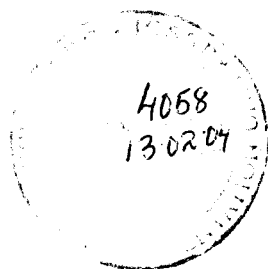
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## Introduction

*Sangkima*

One significant issue now encircling every country in the world today is immigration. It is said that until the first two post-war decades, immigration was perhaps not an issue of dispute between nations mainly because the economic expansion in Europe and other parts of the globe, especially after World War-II, demanded and needed more labour force. For this outlying reason, people of different backgrounds moved from one country to another without any hindrance or restrictions. But the situation has dramatically changed since the last two decades or so. Now, immigration on a large scale has resulted in great ethnic explosions amongst ethnic communities in a country. Therefore, ethnic problem is rampant everywhere in the world.

In this regard, a very unhealthy climate is emerging in Europe. For the first time in postwar Europe, many far Right political

parties are in the offing and these parties are gaining alarming political momentum. In recent local elections all over Europe these parties have won a significant number of seats and harp on one nation, one culture and even one common language. Their leaders say that if elected to power in their countries they would shut the doors to immigrants and send them back to their countries of origin. If this is the emerging trend the future of Europe hangs in balance and it is likely that sooner or later there will be a repetition of what Hitler did to the Jews more than half a century ago.

Like other places in the world, India's problem with illegal immigrants is vulnerable. Bounded by international borders on all sides, India is bound to have infiltration problems. In this matter, the western part of the country with international borders all along the States of Rajasthan and Gujarat needs serious consideration. North India is also bound by the same problem. This region has been offering a fertile land for foreign intruders since the time of Alexander's invasion of India in B.C. 326. Since the coming of the Arabs in Sindh in the early twelfth century A.D. this region has been frequented by infiltrators. As a result, the problems being faced by north India are complexed and complicated more than those of any other part of the country.



The issue of illegal immigrants has also encompassed the whole North-East India. In one sense, the problem of North-East India is possibly worse and more complicated than other parts of the country because different ethnic races could easily enter any part of this region. Bounded by four international borders this tract has provided an easy access to various foreign elements. Consequent upon this, the immigrant problem of this area is acute. To make the problem more complicated, every political party is trying to make capital out of it. It is needless to say that the problem of illegal movements of people in North-East India is said to have influenced, to a great extent, the rise of insurgencies in the region. Whatever may be the state of politics in the North-East India the fact is that those who are responsible for the North-East States must admit that the problems facing this region are getting more complexed and complicated day in and day out.

With this background in view, it may be pointed out that the seminar on "Cross-Border Movements of People Into Mizoram" sponsored by Maulan Abul Kalam Azad Institute of Asian Studies (MAKAIAS) held on 25th April, 2002 at Aizawl, was very significant and relevant because the problems currently faced by the State of Mizoram were highlighted and discussed by distinguished scholars. Bounded by two international borders Mizoram, a tiny State in the North-East India, has 404 and 318

kms long borders with Myanmar in the east and Bangladesh in the west respectively. Because of these two international borders Mizoram has an enormous problem with immigrants.

The papers presented and discussed were informative and thought provoking, and these papers may serve as important documents for future reference on Mizoram. Though the efforts were intended to bring out the whole picture on Mizoram concerning the position of illegal immigrants, the attempts, with these papers as a case study, were not exhaustive, yet, certain conclusions may be drawn from these papers:

First, illegal immigrants have entered Mizoram for two major factors: (i) political and (ii) economic.

Accordingly, the immigrants may be termed as political refugees and economic migrants.

Secondly, some Gurkhas who are now treated as permanent inhabitants are descendants of those whom the British government allowed to settle in Mizoram after their retirement from the services.

Thirdly, the Myanmarse came to Mizoram as a result of political persecution and economic reasons.

Fourthly, the Chakmas entered Mizoram, apart from other reasons, following the invitation of some Mizo chiefs for want of subjects.

Fifthly, Riang, known as Bru today, entered Mizoram following the Riang uprising against the Tripura Maharaja in 1940s.

While writing a short introduction, it is appropriate to write in brief about the impact of Gorkha settlement on Mizoram. This is necessary because of the fact that none of the papers dealt with this aspect.

As noted above, the Gorkhas are descendants of discharged military policemen of long service who were originally recruited in Lushai Hills. In course of time, their numbers have increased alarmingly. Therefore, now they are the people to be reckoned with. Scattered at different places all over Mizoram, the Gorkhas have been maintaining identity as a separate community. Therefore, it is very difficult to identify who is the permanent resident or who an illegal immigrant. This kind of social mobilisation amongst the Gorkhas has created a lot of problem for the people of Mizoram. The Gorkha residents, who are considered as permanent inhabitants of Mizoram, have a right to vote and exercise their franchise in elections. Though they do not contest elections with a separate candidate, the Gorkhas always play a significant role in the elections. Recognising the role of the Gorkhas in the society, Kapur Chand, a Nepali

merchant at Aizawl was nominated as Member of Legislative Assembly (MLA) in the first ministry ever formed by Ch. Chhunga following his party's (Mizo Union Party) landslide victory in the elections held in 1972. The election was necessitated by the upgradation of Mizo District into Union Territory of Mizoram in the same year. Normally, this community used to cast its votes for a particular candidate enmasse, thus allowing one candidate to win. In this way, the Gorkha community has been playing a decisive and meaningful part in the society. For this reason, some local candidates sometimes put baits to the people with a view to winning their votes. It is needless to say that when Mizo National Front (MNF) started the movement for independence from India in 1966, a number of Gorkhas joined MNF again. On the economic front their contribution is said to be marginal. A few of them run shops in Aizawl and some other places in Mizoram but these do not matter much. What matters rather is the role of the cowherds who supply milk to the city and some other towns. Most of the Gorkhas who live in the outskirts of Aizawl with cows for their milk are generally illegal immigrants who came all the way from Nepal. These groups of people do not constitute any threat to the people of Mizoram economically. However, the threat has come through the multiplication of the Gorkha population in Mizoram. Lastly, the Gorkhas are generally backward due to lack of proper education. There is only one Gorkhali

school in Aizawl where they can go up to class X. In spite of this, a number of Gorkhas hold important posts in the government services. After all, the Gorkhas are good friends of the local people and both communities have been living side by side in cordial relationships for a number of years.

Thanks are due to the MAKAIAS for sponsoring seminar and the scholar-contributors for without them the seminar would not have been a success. It may be suggested that this kind of seminar may also be held in other parts of the States in the North-East India, so, as to bring out the real picture of the nature and status of the cross-border movements of people the suggested solutions.