

Honourable Speaker and distinguished Members,

1. It is a great honour indeed to address the Second Session, which is also the first Budget Session, of the Fifth Legislative Assembly of Mizoram. I heartily welcome you to this momentous Session and also extend my very warm greetings to you after the joyous conclusion of the Chapchar Kut festival. I also take this opportunity to extend warm greetings on behalf of my Government and on my own behalf, to the people of Mizoram.

2. This Session will largely address issues concerning the Budget for the year 2004 - 2005 besides deliberating on other business of public concern. With the distinguished presence of a large number of experienced and seasoned legislators, I am confident that the deliberations of this august House will be an enlightening and an enriching experience. I trust that the conduct of this House during the course of this Session will be carried, as ever, will all grace and dignity befitting the rich parliamentary tradition of this august Assembly.

3. On 16th December, 2003, while addressing the First Session of the Assembly, I had apprised the hon'ble Members about the priorities of my Government. I had also broadly outlined the agenda and objectives for achieving sustainable level of growth and for ensuring lasting peace in Mizoram. My Government, let me

assure you, is fully committed to the priorities and to the outlined agenda for the peace and development in Mizoram and will continue to make endeavours to achieve our objectives. As we embark on this task, a sustained pursuit of quality in our works and its continued maintenance should be the hallmark of our ethos.

4. My Government continues to accord high priority to the maintenance of peace and harmony in the State. I am happy to state that the law and order situation during the last one year has been largely peaceful. This had been rendered possible largely through the efforts of an alert and effective law and order machinery of the State. The role played by the people through various social organizations and religious institutions in maintaining social and communal harmony through the years has been no less commendable. My Government has successfully implemented schemes for the improvement and modernization of our Police force during the current year. The process of modernization of our Police force by providing better firepower, equipments, housing, communication facilities and mobility will continue to our police personnel will continue to receive our attention.

5. My Government has carefully addressed the necessity of improving the conditions prevailing in jails in various parts of the State. A Perspective Plan for prison reforms, drawn up by my Government, has already received the approval of the Government of India. Under this Programme, schemes for modernisation of prisons have been taken up with an amount of Rs. 266.25 lakhs released by Government of India for construction of new District Jails at Serchhip, Mamit and Lawngtlai along with renovation and modernization of existing jails. This effort will continue in the next financial year.

6. Achievement of self-sufficiency in the production of foodgrains has remained a continuous endeavour of my Government. The agriculture and Minor Irrigation Department has taken up land development in 206 hectares during the current financial year. Works for construction of 38.3 kms of potential area connectivity are also progressing well. It is proposed to cover 99,534 hectares under different crops like paddy, pulses, maize, vegetables and commercial crops with an allocation of Rs. 112.00 lakhs. An area of 83,644 hectares has been covered during the current Kharif season and the remaining area will be achieved during the Rabi season. The Department has well foreseen the threat posed by the imminent gregarious flowering of bamboo in the year 2007 which could trigger and upsurge of rodents. Therefore, pre-emptive actions like distribution of rodenticides to villages, launching of awareness campaigns and survey of bamboo flowering areas to earmark the areas where the flowering has occurred so as to take effective precautionary and ameliorative measures, have been initiated. Efforts are continuing for replacement of low-yielding varieties of crops by high-yielding ones with an objective of increased production. While making efforts towards introducing high-yielding varieties of crops, emphasis on organic farming, encouragement of commercial crops and mechanized farming will continue simultaneously. The Department has also distributed 10,000 (ten thousand) seedlings of red oil palm to farmers during the current year. As many as 105 projects with an allocation of Rs. 410.00 lakhs were taken up this year under the 'National Watershed Development Programme under Rainfed Areas', along with 46 projects with fund allocation of Rs. 350.00 lakhs under 'Watershed Development Programme for Shifting Cultivation Areas'. The 'Mizoram Intodelhna Project', which is envisaged to bring about a higher degree of self-sufficiency in agriculture products and settled method of cultivation, is well underway.

7. Recording the immense potentiality of horticulture in Mizoram, my Government continues to lay emphasis on its development. Fully aware of the need for extension of infrastructural resources for the benefit of farmers engaged in this field of activity, my Government opened new Horticulture Divisions at Kolasib, Serchhip

and Lawngtlai. The Department has also completed construction of District Horticulture Offices at Lunglei and Kolasib Phase - I. Staff quarters were also constructed at Chhingchhip, Serchhip, Mamit, Khawhai, N. Vanlaiphai, Khawzawl and Kawlkulh. Further, construction of District Horticulture Offices at Lawngtlai and Serchhip, staff quarters at Hnahthial, Thingsai, Lawngtlai, Tlabung and extension of District Horticulture Offices at Kolasib and Lunglei, will be taken up. To provide expert assistance, 'Tissue Culture Laboratory' and an 'Integrated Unit for Mushroom Development' at Chite and a Plant Health Clinic at Aizawl, were established under Horticulture Technology Mission. The Department has also given assistance to the farmers engaged in the cultivation of grapes, passion fruit and hatkora. The last harvesting season has seen an increased production of oranges as a result of the programme of Rejuvenation of Mandarin Orange Orchards around the villages of South Hlimen, Mamit and Melthum with funding from North - Eastern Council. It is a matter of satisfaction that the Horticulture Department has started exporting Anthurium flower since October 2003. Integrated Development of Jhumland through horticulture plantation schemes have covered 80 villages under Aibawk, Thingdawl and Chawngte R.D. Blocks and the scheme will be continued in the coming year. Supply of organic manures, equipments, tools vegetables and flower seeds, plantation crops and mushroom spawns at subsidized rates will also continue. My Government will continue construction of link roads to provide connectivity to horticulture potential areas for the benefit of farmers. In order to improve the quality and marketability of products, my Government will give great emphasis on organic farming in the State. It will also be our endeavour in the coming years to encourage more and more permanent cultivations of different cash crops, especially medicinal and aromatic plants of high value species. Establishment of Tissue Culture Laboratory for generating quality planting materials of different commercial crops, including bamboo, will attract our special attention.

8. Due importance has been given to the development of Sericulture which has an immense potential for providing means of livelihood to a sizeable rural population of the State. Cocoon and raw silk production has shown a tremendous increase in the recent past. More than 5,000 families are now involved in sericulture activities and the number is expected to increase two fold within the next five years. All the four varieties of silkworms, namely, mulberry, muga, tasar and eri, can thrive well in our State. Apart from the normal Plan Schemes, projects on development of mulberry sericulture under 'Swarnjayanti Gram Swarozgar Yojana' (SGSY) with a total project cost of Rs. 51.00 crores have been undertaken in the Lai, Mara and Chakma Autonomous District Councils. Further, an 'Integrated Sericulture Development Project' in Mizoram has also been prepared and submitted to the Government of India, and will involve an estimated cost of Rs. 16.16 crores which is expected to be approved shortly.

9. With the intervention of the Central Assistance under Fresh Water Aquaculture through 'Fish Farmers Development Agency', the Fisheries Department has already assisted 1,962 fish farmers of the State. 42,430 fish farmers have been given short - term training in fish culture technology. Under NEC assistance, 268 lakhs of fish seeds and 88 MT. Of fish feed have been distributed to the farmers during the current financial year. To achieve self - sufficiency in fish seed production, the Department is also set to complete the Fish Seed Farms at Tamdil, Thenzawl, Ngengpui and Saikhawthlir by the end of this year with the final allocation of Rs. 128.00 lakh under Non - Lapsable Central Pool of Resources. In the coming year, my Government proposes to cover 300 hectares of additional water area under fish culture with a proposal outlay of Rs. 165.00 lakhs. The endeavour of my Government in the field of fish production is not only self - sufficiency but to transform it to a sector of rural economy that earns a sizeable revenue with markets beyond the state boundaries, creating avenues for immense employment opportunities for the rural

population.

10. In order to give extended support to livestock farmers through vaccination, supply of cheap fodder and fuel, the Animal Husbandry and Veterinary Department has undertaken 5 (five) Centrally Sponsored Schemes, namely - Rinderpest Eradication Programme Assistance to State for Control of Animal Diseases, Professional Efficiency Development, Sample Survey, National Project for Cattle and Buffalo Development, at the cost of Rs. 154.55 lakhs. In addition, a programme for 'Mobilisation and Development of Animal Feed and Fodder Resources' (MODAFER) and 'Development and Sustainable Base for Pig Production' (DESBAPP) with a total project cost of Rs. 7.25 crores for Rs. 6.57 crores respectively, has been undertaken with funding from Non-Lapsable Central Pool of Resources. A Base Pig Breeding Farm is being constructed at Thenzawl by PIGFED at a cost of Rs. 127.00 lakhs with the financial support from the North-Eastern Council (NEC). Works under 'Integrated Dairy Development Project' for establishment of dairy plant, is being undertaken at Kolasib with a project cost of Rs. 199.41 lakhs. My Government will continue to strengthen infrastructure by constructing staff quarters and office building at Lunglei, laboratory and library buildings at the 'School of Veterinary Sciences, Lunglei, Cattle byre and Operation room at Hnahthial. Grants-in-aid and subsidies to livestock farmers will continue. Under the Centrally Sponsored Scheme, my Government has initiated establishment of turkey farm at Selesih. The Department has initiated implementation of Animal Slaughter House near Aizawl with a project cost of Rs. 321.00 lakhs, which is funded from the North Eastern Council (NEC).

11. Utmost importance is given to the sustainable use of forest resources of Mizoram, while maintaining the ecological balance and preserving valuable flora and fauna. Working Plans and Schemes have been drawn up in the Environment and Forest Department under which, Departmental timber operation will be carried out for making timber available to general public at a reasonable price. During the current year, the Department has undertaken the task of development and maintenance of the State Zoo at Lungverh. The Department is actively developing technical strategy for the maximum harvest and utilisation of the existing bamboo growing stock, in anticipation of the damage expected to be caused by the gregarious flowering of bamboo in 2007. During the current financial year, the Department has taken up the task of afforestation of 10,980 hectares of land through 16 (sixteen) Forest Development Agencies under National Afforestation Programme. In order to improve and maintain the existing construction of buildings, survey and demarcation of protected areas/reserved forests, forest fire control and its management including fire line cutting, engagement of fire watchers, training and awareness campaign through NGOs, have been taken up under infrastructure development scheme.

12. To improve the transportation facility of the State, an Inter-State Bus Terminus is under construction at Chaltlang at an estimated cost of Rs. 901.40 lakhs from the North Eastern Council (NEC). District Transport Office at Serchhip has been opened during 2003 - 2004. During the next financial year, development of various building infrastructures at different locations will be continued by the Department. For upgradation of the standard of issuing driving licences, Smart Card has been introduced at the District Transport Office at Aizawl. A new Bus Terminus is being constructed at Thuampui, Aizawl with a financial support from the Ministry of Urban Development, Government of India.

13. For development of Tea Industry, 6.75 lakhs tea seedlings were planted in Ngopa and Biata covering 60 hectares during 2003 - 2004 and during the coming year, 8 lakhs tea seedlings are expected to be planted in the same area. Monetary incentives are being given to small tea growers besides providing training outside the State. For development of handicrafts, Bamboo Common Facility has

been set up at Zuangtui Industrial Estate. E - Governance Project in Mizoram Secretariat is to be executed in the coming financial year. Works on the Integrated Infrastructure Development Centre (IIDC), Pukpui with a project to be completed in August 2004. The Bamboo Processing Industry under joint venture at Sairang is nearing its commissioning. My Government will continue to give utmost emphasis on the economic utilisation of the rich bamboo resources in the State by taking full advantage of the newly evolved policies and programmes of the Government of India so as to generate employment and bring about prosperity among the people of the State.

14. My Government is committed to undertake new road projects and also to improve road connectivity in the State. The Public Works Department has already improved 184 kms. of roads and has also carried out rehabilitation and maintenance of 520 kms. under the World Bank funded Mizoram State Road Project. The Aizawl - Reiek - West lungdar road of 40 kms. length and the Rawpuichhip - Buarpu road of 90 kms. length are in the final stage of completion. Nine Road schemes have been approved by DONER to be funded under Non - Lapsable Central Pool of Resources, involving an expenditure of Rs. 6,308.60 lakhs. Under Economics and Inter - State Roads Scheme, the Kawlchaw - Tongkolong road, bridges over river Tuichang on Hnahthial - Thingsai road and bridge over river Tlawng on Aibawk - Darlung road involving Rs. 1493.31 lakhs have been sanctioned. Improvement of riding quality has been taken up on the Sairang - Mamit - Manu road NH - 44A, Seling - Tipaimukh road NH - 150 and Bilkhawthlir - Bairabi - Panchgram road NH - 154 and the project is to be completed during 2004 - 2005. The Sairang - Lengpui sector of NH - 44A has also been recently completed, thus reducing the distance between Aizawl and Lengpui Airport by more than 10 kms. Under PMGSY, which commenced from 2000 - 2001, eight road schemes at a cost of Rs. 11.93 crores have been completed, twenty - two other schemes at a cost of Rs. 49.37 crores are nearing completion and twenty - one schemes are still in progress. Twelve roads to connect villages with population of more than 1000, at a cost of Rs. 88.35 crores, are expected to be sanctioned soon. Construction of Mizoram House, Vasant Vihar, New Delhi at an estimated cost of Rs. 641.22 lakhs is in progress. Construction of staff quarters for Mizoram House, Guwahati at a cost of Rs. 132.16 lakhs, construction of Assembly Annexe building at a cost Rs. 430.45 lakhs, construction of Speaker bungalow at Tuikhuahtlang at a cost of Rs. 110.00 lakhs, are being taken up. Under the Eleventh Finance Commission Award, construction of Raj Bhavan and three new Secretariat buildings are nearing completion. Construction works of DC Offices, bungalow and staff quarters in the 5 new Districts Headquarters are also in the final stages of completion. My Government is aware of the need for having a Mizoram House in Mumbai to accommodate patients suffering from cancer and other serious diseases who are continually referred to that city. For this purpose, 6 (six) flats at Sun Towers at G.D. Ambedkar Marg, Mumbai, have been purchased by my Government. Similarly, to meet the long felt need of having Mizoram in Manipur where a considerable number of Mizos live, my Government has purchased a plot of land at Imphal for the construction of Mizoram House and another plot at Churachanpur for construction of Mizoram House Annexe.

15. My Government continues to take steps towards achieving self - sufficiency in power. Construction of Thermal Power Plant of 22.92 MW capacity at Bairabi has been completed. The improvement of sub - station and distribution network at Aizawl and Lunglei and construction of 132 KV line from Bairabi to Bawktlang (Kolasib), are nearing completion. Among the hydel projects of the State, Tuipanglui Small Hydel Project (3MW) and Kau - Tlabung Small Hydel Project (3 MW) are also being commissioned shortly. With regard to transmission and distribution, 132 KV lines from Saitual to Darlawn, from Khawzawl to Lungdar East, from Khawzawl to Ngopa, 132 KV Single Circuit line from Tuirial Hydel Project to

Kolasib, and 132 KV Sub - station are expected to be completed during 2004. Efforts continue for mobilising resources for the proposed 80 MW Bairabi Hydel Project.

16. My Government continues its endeavour to provide safe drinking water to all the habitations of Mizoram. Under Rural Water Supply Programme of the current financial year, 60 habitations have been commissioned till January 2004. 267 numbers of partially covered (PC) habitations will be targeted to bring them to the category of Fully Covered (FC) habitations during 2004 - 2005. Under Urban Water Supply Programme, works on composite N. Kawnpui Water Supply Scheme, Greater Champhai Water Supply Scheme and Greater Mamit Water Supply Scheme, are in progress and likely to be commissioned during 2004 - 2005. Greater Aizawl Water Supply Scheme Phase - II is also in progress and is likely to be commissioned by the end of 2005 - 2006. Lengpui Water Supply Scheme under Accelerated Urban Water Supply Programme (AUWSP) is likely to be commissioned during 2004. Execution of Drainage Project Phase - I (Construction of artificial channel) at Aizawl is in progress.

17. My Government continues to lay emphasis on alleviation of poverty and development of rural areas of Mizoram. Under PMGY (Gramin Awaas) during 2003 - 2004, 2,000 new houses have been constructed and 1,440 houses were upgraded at a cost of Rs. 626.00 lakhs. Under Border Area Development Programme, Rs. 912.00 lakhs was sanctioned for development works in the 12 RD Blocks along the International borders. Under this programme, construction of playgrounds, school buildings, community halls, internal roads, bridges, market buildings and other rural assets were undertaken. In addition, the Department is also taking up Watershed Development Projects at Mamit and Serchhip Districts at the cost of Rs. 480.00 lakhs and Rs. 479.96 lakhs respectively.

18. My Government stands committed to provide health for all. The Health and Family Welfare Department will continue to provide preventive, curative and promotional services. Implementation of Regional Diagnostic Centers project at Lunglei and Champhai under the 11th Finance Commission Award is continuing and is likely to be completed soon. Medical gas pipeline is being installed at Civil Hospital, Aizawl and construction of OPD block in the same hospital is also undertaken. I am happy to say that improvement of 6 bedded Intensive Care Unit (ICU) at Civil Hospital, Aizawl has been completed and operationalised. With financial assistance from DONER, Phase - II of construction of 200 bedded Civil Hospital at Lunglei has been completed and Phase - III is being started. In the coming financial year, upgradation of hospitals in various places of Mizoram will be taken up.

19. Promotion of the art and culture of the people of Mizoram is an important task of my Government. Mizo Cultural Troupes were sent abroad to Japan and Malaysia thus presenting a glimpse of Mizo Culture to these nations. The coming year will see the Art and Culture Department taking steps for protection of sites and monuments of cultural importance. The Department will also embark on construction of State Museum Extension at the New Capital Complex at Khatla.

20. The availability of foodstuff in the State during the last year has been largely satisfactory. My Government will continue to ensure that adequate supplies of foodgrains are made available in the State through its PDS network. Special schemes like Annapurna, Antyodaya Anna Yojana (AAY), Midday Meal and Sampoorna Grameen Rozgar Yojana have played important roles in the increased availability of foodgrains. Timely lifting, procurement and distribution of foodstuff by the Department have considerably helped the public in procuring essential commodities. The Legal Metrology Wing is constantly alert to prevent adulteration of foodstuff, cement

and petroleum products.

21. Our endeavours in the fields of sports and youth activities, combined with the relentless zeal of the sportspersons, have yielded rich dividends. Our football teams have created history by becoming champions in both categories of Boys Under - 14 and Under - 17 years in the Subroto Mukherjee Cup Football Tournament held in Delhi. Mizoram won its first ever championship title in the Under - 16 Sub - Junior National Football Championship held in Aizawl. All these and the medals that Miss Jenny R. Lalremliani, boxer, has won in the international and national level have truly demonstrated that our youths have come a long way in various disciplines of games and sports. The Mizoram Bharat Scouts and Guides participated in the 4th SAARC Jamboree at Mauchak, Bangladesh. The Department of Sports and Youth Services will continue to promote sports and youth activities as ever and will exercise its best of efforts in developing standard sports infrastructure in various parts of Mizoram.

22. My Government is happy to notice that the aspiration of the people of Mizoram for development of trade with neighbouring countries is gradually being realised. The Second Border Trade Point between India and Myanmar at Zokhawthar - Rih Sector was inaugurated by the Minister of Commerce, Union Republic of Myanmar on 30th January, 2004, thus opening a new vista for formal international trade through the borders of Mizoram. Soon, these initiatives will gain further momentum when the proposed roads from Zokhawthar to Falam - Kalemeo and Zokhawthar to Rih - Tiddim - Kalemeo are developed across our border under external aids of the Government of India. On our borders with Bangladesh, development of Border Trade Centre near Tlabung is underway. Further, the Department of Trade and Commerce has undertaken construction of a Wholesale Market and Rural Primary Market for Agricultural and Horticultural produces with funds received under Technology Mission. Under Macro - management Scheme, transport subsidies are being granted for lifting agricultural produces from the fields to urban areas.

23. The current year has seen a total application of Electronic Voting Machines in the Elections to the Mizoram Legislative Assembly. A commendable 80% of the electorates have been covered under the Electoral Photo Identity Card Scheme. For the first time, the election related background informations in respect of Mizoram have been uploaded on the Election Commission's official website. Preparations for the forthcoming election to the 2004 Lok Sabha is going on in full swing.

24. Apart from strict enforcement of the MLTP Act, the Excise Department has made all out efforts to check the menace of drug trafficking and drug abuse. As a result of their untiring efforts, 1,024 drug traffickers and abusers have been apprehended this year. 2,993 persons were arrested for contravention of the Prohibition Law during the current year. The Department will continue to make similar endeavours.

25. My Government gives continuing importance to the upliftment of women, children and the aged and also extends various kinds of assistance to the handicapped and the disabled. The National Programme for Rehabilitation of Persons with Disabilities (NPRDP) has been implemented during the current year. Women Empowerment Programme has received a boost with the implementation of the centrally sponsored Swayasidha Scheme. Vocational Training Centres to impart training to the youth for self - employment are now operational at Kolasib, Serchhip and Lunglei. Two new Centres are expected to be operational soon at Champhai and Saiha. Our concerns towards women, children, the aged and the physically and socially disadvantaged groups shall continue as ever before.

26. It is the endeavour of my Government to promote tourism in Mizoram. The Department of Tourism is giving emphasis on construction of tourist infrastructure. During the current year, the Department has commissioned 3 Tourist Cottages at Thingdawl, 6 Tourist Cottages at Thenzawl and 1 Tourist Home at Lunglei. The Ministry of Tourism, Government of India, has approved four new projects - Tourist Lodges at Zokhawthar, Sakawrdai, Khamrang and a Tourist resort at Hmuifang. The Department has participated in the Trade Fairs and Food Festivals held in New Delhi and in the International Tourism Exhibition at Chandigarh as partner State. The Department spearheaded celebrations of Thalfavang Kut and Chapchar Kut in Mizoram with a view to promote Mizo culture and also tourism in the State.

27. My Government is aware of the need for human resource development of which education is the primary input. Pre - matric Scholarship were distributed to 171,016 deserving students. Free text books were distributed to 1,60,776 students under Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA) Scheme during the current financial year. 400 continuing Education Centres under the Adult Education Wing of the Department are working to achieve total literacy in the State. The Department has also established Village Adult Education Committee (VAEC) in every village to promote adult education right at the village level. An amount of Rs. 450.00 lakhs has been approved for construction of mini DIETs in 6 (six) Districts namely Kolasib, Mamit, Champhai, Serchhip, Lawngtlai and Saiha under Centrally Sponsored Scheme.

28. Two new courses of BCA and BSc (Computer Science) were introduced in Government Zirtiri Residential Science College under North Eastern Council Scheme. Post Matric Scholarship, Merit Scholarship, Incentive Cash award and Research Fellowship were distributed to 16,246 deserving students. Under External Aided Project, the construction work of Technical Building at Chaltlang has been completed. Construction works of Mizoram Polytechnic, Lunglei and Women polytechnic, Aizawl are mostly completed. Construction of buildings for College of Teacher Education and Mizoram Hindi Training College Complex, Durtlang under Centrally Sponsored Scheme are also almost completed.

29. Construction of Transit accommodation for All India Service officers at the New Capital Complex, Khatla has been completed. Construction of Aizawl City Centre building has been started. High mast lightings have been erected at 7 (seven) different places in Aizawl. Construction of markets at 6 (six) taken up. Circle Offices of the Local Administration Department at Champhai and Kolasib were upgraded to District Level Offices. District Level Administration Offices were set up at Mamit and Serchhip.

30. My Government is aware of the need for preparedness in dealing with natural calamities. Awareness campaigns through local newspapers and magazines are being constantly conducted. In addition, relief materials like silpouline, tents, shovels, daos and torchlight have been procured and stored in all the District Headquarters for meeting emergencies.

31. Weaning away Jhumia families to a permanent system of cultivation continues to be given emphasis by the Department of Soil and Water Conservation of my Government. 216 hectares of land is being developed for coffee and large cardamom plantation to benefit 432 marginal farmers. Further, 78 water harvesting ponds and 76 hectares terraces are being constructed. My Government has undertaken the implementation of SINGLA project at Hriphaw and Lushaicherra with an expenditure of Rs. 100.00 lakhs this year. A project to bring 160 hectares and 56 hectares under coffee and large cardamom cultivation respectively with an outlay of Rs. 250.00 lakhs is being proposed for the next year.



32. It is a matter of great satisfaction that a land measuring 3 bighas has been identified for construction of a new Administrative Training Institute on the land vacated by Assam Rifles at Khatla. A sum of Rs. 9.37 crores has also been sanctioned by the Ministry of Urban Development for construction of the institute on the identified land. The National Building Constructed Company (NBCC) will be the construction agency for this project. The construction activity is expected to start within the next financial year. The Administrative Training Institute continues to conduct training programmes sponsored by the State Government and the Government of India all the year long. This year, the Administrative Training Institute successfully conducted the prestigious Foundation Training Programme for a batch of 20 (twenty) Mizoram Civil Services probationers and similar training programme for 12 (twelve) other newly recruited Mizoram Civil Services probationers is nearing completion. Besides, the Institute for the first time, has also conducted Training Programme on Mizo Shorthand with Government Stenographers as the target group. Very recently, the Institute has also taken up an elaborate exercise of training for Government functionaries and NGOs on Disaster management under the funds provided by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP).

33. The Department of Information and Public Relations continues its work of disseminating Government activities and implementation of various programmes through 'Tunlai Chanchin' and 'Zoram Thlirna' at Aizawl, 'Khawvel' at Lunglei and 'Kaladan' at Saiha. It conducted all Mizoram Editors Conference on Economic Development. The Department will continue its effort to nurture the fledgling journalism in the State. The Labour and Employment Department has imparted training to more than 500 trainees in 18 vocational trades under the craftsmen-training scheme. Two new Industrial Training Institutes have been set up at Lunglei and Saiha. It also plans to provide training course in 21 vocational trades to 700 trainees. The Economics and Statistics Department has collected information on various economic activities of the State to enable my Government to formulate approaches and strategies for our planning activities. The 60th Round of National Survey is being carried out by this Department from January 2004 and will cover morbidity and healthcare, household consumer expenditure and employment.

34. Time constraint prevents me from highlighting all the achievements of every Department of my Government. However, the following achievements cannot go unnoticed. The State Lottery during the current financial year till February end 2004, has made a total revenue collection of Rs. 5.75 crores. The contribution of the Taxation Department has been no less commendable. Their total collection during this year upto 31st January has exceeded Rs. 2480.59 lakhs. In order to increase our tax resources, steps are being taken for introduction of Value Added Tax (VAT) to replace the traditional sales tax regime. The role played by the Institutional Finance has also been significant. Collection of Savings Fund as on January 2004 was Rs. 21.75 crores against the budgetary target of Rs. 15.00 crores. Prompt settlement of pension to the employees of my Government has always been given priority. The Department of Accounts and Treasuries has settled 767 cases of pensions and family pensions besides settling a number of cases relating to gratuities, Insurance Funds and final General Provident Fund (GPF).

35. The honourable Members may be aware that my Government has made commendable achievement in providing employment and self-employment opportunities not only to the rural population but also to the educated unemployed Mizo youths through various sectors of our economy in the State as well as those of outside the State. It will be our endeavour to continue this effort in the future especially for the benefit of the increasing educated unemployed Mizo youths.

36. Today, I want to share with the honourable Members that my Gov-

ernment has always received sustained support from the Government of India. The contributions of the Central Agencies stationed here have been commendable. I am happy to say that the Cellular Mobile Phone connectivity has been started in Mizoram and it was first launched in Aizawl on 31st January 2004, thus giving a further fillip to the State in the field of telecommunications.

37. In conclusion, I assure the honourable Members that my Government will continue in its endeavour to fulfill the objectives of its policies and programmes. I am confident that your deliberations will have far reaching results in bringing about prosperity to all sections of the people of Mizoram. I seek the cooperation of all honourable Members of this august House to strengthen the hands of my Government in realising its ultimate objective of ushering Mizoram into peaceful and prosperous State.

With these words, I wish your deliberations a success.

Thank you. Jai Hind.