NINTH MIZORAM LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
(SECOND SESSION CUM BUDGET SESSION)

LIST OF BUSINESS

FOR EIGHTH SITTING ON THURSDAY, THE 29th FEBRUARY, 2024
(Time 10:30 A.M to 1:00 P.M. and 2:00 P.M. to 4:00 P.M.)

QUESTIONS

1. ***Questions*** entered in separate list to be asked and oral answers given.

LAYING OF PAPERS

2. **PU LALDUHOMA,** Hon'ble Chief Minister to lay on the Table of the House a copy each of the following :
   (i) The 17th Annual Report 2022-2023 of the Mizoram Information Commission.
   (ii) The Economic Survey 2023-2024 under Planning & Programme Implementation Department.

3. **PU F. RODINGLIANA,** Minister to lay on the Table of the House a copy of the 14th Annual Report 2021-2022 of Joint Electricity Regulatory Commission (JERC) for Manipur and Mizoram.

PRESENTATION OF REPORT

4. **THE SPEAKER** to present to the House the Second Report of the Business Advisory Committee for the current Session.

LEGISLATIVE BUSINESS

Bill for introduction, consideration and passing

5. **PU B. LALCHHANZOVA,** Minister to beg leave of the House to introduce "The Indian Stamp (Mizoram Amendment) Bill, 2024."

ALSO

to introduce the Bill

to move that the Bill be taken into consideration

AND

to move that the Bill be passed.

(VANLALTHANTLINGI)
Commissioner & Secretary

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SPEAKER : *Words from the mouth of the wise are gracious, but fools are consumed by their own lips and fools multiply words. No one knows what is coming who can tell someone else what will happen after them?*

- Ecclesiastes 10:14

Today, as per the initiative of our Tourism Minister on the occasion of the eve of Chapchar Kut, I have seen many of us wearing our traditional attire which makes me glad.

I hereby inform the House that our members - Pu Lalthansanga, Pu Lalmuanpuia Punte and Pu Lalfamkima are absent today.

QUESTIONS & ANSWERS:

We shall move on for question and answers. The Hachhek MLA, Pu Robert Romawia Royte may be invited to ask *Starred Question No. 101.*

Starred Question No. 101 *– Matter of Biometric enrollment.*

PU ROBERT ROMAWIA ROYTE: Pu Speaker, thank you. Before I ask questions, we have started a new initiative under our Tourism Minister which makes me a bit nervous. I also extend my hearty Chapchar Kut greetings to you all. My questions for the head of Political & Cabinet Department, Chief Minister are

a) Does the previous Cabinet Meeting resolve to decline biometric enrollment of Myanmar refugees?
b) Could you give me a copy of the minute of the meeting?

SPEAKER : Let me invite Chief Minister, Pu Lalduhoma to answer the questions.

PU LALDUHOMA, CHIEF MINISTER: Pu Speaker, before I answer the questions, I apologize for not adhering to the dress code for the day. My answers are-

a) The issue regarding Biometric and Biographic of Myanmar refugees was the topic of the Cabinet Meeting on 17.9.2023. Due to the upcoming Mizoram General Election, the Council of Ministers decided that 'the Mizoram government cannot yet carry on its implementation'.
b) I have attached the minute of the meeting.

SPEAKER : Let me invite Pu Robert Romawia Royte to ask *Supplementary questions*.

PU ROBERT ROMAWIA ROYTE: Pu Speaker, thank you. I hope both the previous and the current government understand that we have to be careful in this regard. It is not an ordinary matter as it involves a foreign issue. We have to provide adequate care for our officials who are expected to work tirelessly for our people.

Myanmar refugees are becoming a burning topic and they are indeed in dire need of help and empathy. My question to the Chief Minister is that, the previous government ask for relief for refugees and what is the stance of the current government?

Additionally, I would like the Chief Minister to tell me the current and future plans for our brothers and sisters from Manipur who fled to Mizoram due to the harsh realities of their state.

SPEAKER : Let me invite the concerned minister, Pu Lalduhoma to answer the questions.

PU LALDUHOMA, CHIEF MINISTER: Pu Speaker, I would like to elaborately answer to the questions.

As directed by the Home Ministry last year April, biometric identification for Myanmar and Bangladesh refugees has been executed thoroughly. Trainings were conducted and nodal officers were appointed. However, since election was on the horizon, it was of the Home Ministry opinion to refer the matter to the previous Cabinet. The then Cabinet decided to halt its implementation. Our government determine not to continue implementing this process. Moreover, I have said to the Home Minister that, "the portal being used currently is provisioned for illegal migrants that are yet to be deported and this cause panic among the people." I requested him to give me assurance that deportation will not take place until things get better and I received the same.

Furthermore, as stated by me to the Home Minister, "We have decided not to use the portal as the Household Registration Bill that has been pending with the President would be more beneficial for our villages." It is now in the hands of the Governor and the President. I have also forwarded the question from Home Ministry to the Governor yesterday.

We have always supported the refugees with whatever resources we possessed. As we all know, the previous government received 3 crores for the same, but I do not have knowledge on its utilization as it is a part of Secret Fund. The Prime Minister and the Home Minister are well aware of our problems and have extended their support monetarily in which we are very thankful.

SPEAKER : We shall move on to *Starred Question No.* 102 and let me invite the Tuirial MLA, Pu K. Laldanwgliana to ask his questions.

PU K. LALDAWNGLIANA: Pu Speaker, my question for the Information & Communication Technology Department Minister are –

a) How many projects were invited as restricted and open tenders under the ICT Department during 2019 – December 2023?

b) Which year did the Mizoram e-Governance Society under the ICT Department got a grading system?
c) Could you detail the nature of work of ICT Department?

SPEAKER : May the concerned minister, Dr. Vanlalthlana be invited to answer to the questions.

DR. VANLALTHLANA, MINISTER: Pu Speaker, thank you. My answers are as follows –

a) During 2019 – December 2023, 1 project under restricted tender and 3 projects under open tender were invited under the ICT Department. The expenses are as under: -
   Restricted Tender –
   Establishment of Smart Classroom in Minority Concentration Areas of Mizoram under PMJVK. ₹339.83 Lakh;
   Open Tender –
   i) Establishment of IT Skill Development & Training Center under PMJVK. ₹615.24 Lakh.
   ii) SASCI (e-Services Postal & Upgradation of MSDC). ₹20.37 Crore;
   iii) Establishment of 15 Village Knowledge Centre (VKC) in Mizoram. ₹3.35 Crore;
b) Mizoram e-Governance Society was upgraded to a Grant-in-Aid system in the year 2019.
c) The main works of ICT Department are mentioned below –
   1) *Under* Telecommunications:
      i) 4G Saturation Project
      ii) 5G Services Roll Out
      iii) Online RoW Portal
   2) *Under PMJVK:*
      i) Smart Classroom
      ii) IT Skill Development & Training Centre
   3) *Under* SASCI:
      i) Establishment of OPGW & ADSS for backbone connectivity of District and Blocks in Mizoram;
      ii) Mizoram e-Services portal and upgradation of Mizoram State Data Centre & Cloud enablement
   4) NABARD – Establishment of 15 Village Knowledge Centers in Mizoram;
   5) Software Development
   6) IT Awareness among the masses

SPEAKER : I invite Pu K. Laldawngliana to ask his *Supplementary questions.*

PU K. LALDAWNGLIANA : Pu Speaker, thank you. As we have heard from the answers, it is evident that the ICT Department has a lot of future projections. I hope that with the supervision of our abled Minister, he will continue this great work going ahead.

My *Supplementary questions* are –

i) How many villages are equipped with free Wi-Fi by the ICT Department?

ii) Are there any large-scale future projects in sight?

SPEAKER : May the Lawngtlai East MLA, Pu Dr. Lorrain Lalpekliana be invited to ask *Supplementary questions*.

DR. LORRAIN LALPEKLIANA CHINZAH: Pu Speaker, thank you. My questions to the ICT Department Minister are –

i) How will MSEGS be taken forward?

ii) Are the accounts being audited? Could you provide the audit copy of the same?

iii) How will the IT-Skill Development & Training Centre in Minority Concentration Area, Mizoram be carried through?

SPEAKER : Let Pi Baryl Vanneihsangi be invited to ask *Supplementary questions*.

PI BARYL VANNEIHSANGI: Pu Speaker, thank you. My questions to the ICT Department Minister are as follows –

i) How far has the Mizo Fiber Grid Network implemented?

ii) Has the ICT Department done anything for the schools?

SPEAKER : I invite the ICT Department Minister Dr. Vanlalthlana to answer whatever he could.

DR. VANLALTHLANA, MINISTER: Pu Speaker, thank you.

To answer Pu K. Laldawngliana's question - Free Wi-Fi have been installed in 500 villages by V-Set Team as a Central project. However, due to certain discrepancies, it has not been activated yet. We will be looking into it.

Answering Pi Baryl Vanneihsangi's question – Mizo Fiber Grid Network is a work in progress; tender has been invited last year. However, since all the responders are in financial shortages, the Project Review & Steering Committee re-think to request for additional 70 crore under SASCI. We are not certain if our request will be accepted or not.

In response to Dr. Lorrain Lalpekliana's question – MSEGS is implemented by the government, under which we have 42 employees. In the current year, ₹120,00,000/- as

Grant-in-Aid has been given for management. MSEGS look after numerous Central and State projects and draw administrative expense of 3% in which they manage themselves. The ‘State Data Centre’ has been terminated as a Central project in 2019 and the State continues to look after it. Yearly expenses of 50-60 lakhs are required for maintenance, which is funded through MSEGS. Accounts has been audited regularly; I shall furnish the Audit copy to you as well.

The IT-Skill Development & Training Centers have been operating in seven villages such as – Lungsen, Chawngte, W. Bunghmun, Diltlang, Zawlnuam, W. Phaileng anjd Bungtlang. Through these Centers, rural population (perhaps student) will benefit enormously by inculcating knowledge in the domain of IT. Better capacity measures will be taken up and ₹666.40 lakhs has been provisioned for these Centers.

In response to the last questions posed by Pi Baryl Vanneihsangi – I have previously answered the question regarding the Mizo Fiber Grid. As mentioned earlier, ICT has helped numerous schools and under the PMJVK scheme, ‘Establishment of Smart Classroom in Minority Concentration Areas of Mizoram’ is operational in 20 schools. Under NEC, through the IT-Education for Schools project, computer sets, UPS and printer has been installed in 150 schools.

SPEAKER : Thank you for the answers. We shall now move to the new question. I shall invite the Lawngtlai West MLA, Pu C. Ngunlianchunga to ask *Starred Question No.* 103.

PU C. NGUNLIANCHUNGA: Pu Speaker, thank you. My questions are mentioned in *Starred Question No.* 103, 109 and 110 and I hope the PWD Minister would be able to answer these questions as they are all related to the Department concerned.
Starred Question No. 103 –

a) Has the SASCI worked for the Lawngtlai West Assembly Constituency during 2021-2024? What work have been done?
b) Where all did the work take place? Could you tell me the name, place and amount of the work?
c) Who were the Contractors? Could you tell me their name and full address?
d) Pu Speaker, since SASCI is a new scheme, I believe this should have been Unstarred question, however as it is extremely important for the people, I have put it under Starred question.

Pu Speaker, those are my questions, thank you.

SPEAKER : You need not feel unsettled as it is a question deemed to be important. Let the PWD Minister, Pu Vanlalhlana be invited to answer whatever he could.

PU VANLALHLANA, MINISTER: Pu Speaker, the answer for the questions posed to me are as follows –

a) Works have been taken up under SASCI during 2023-2024 which are:
   i) Improvement of Approach Road – Kawrthindeng WRC Area (Length = 5.5 km) and,
   ii) Construction of Mautlang – Boroguisuri (Length = 5.00 km)

b) Under the Improvement of Approach Road – Kawrthindeng WRC Area (Length = 5.5 km), the work done are mentioned below:
   i) Internal Road Pavement (Approach Road – PWD Rest House at Chawnhu) Worker – F. Lalkaisanga, Bazar Veng, Lawngtlai; Amount - ₹6.70 lakh.
   ii) Construction of Side drain near Piangliana Residence at Mualbu 'L'; Worker – F. Lalkaisanga, Bazar Veng, Lawngtlai; Amount – 3.20 lakh.
   iii) Approach Road between PMGSY Road – Kawnkhua; Worker – F. Lalkaisanga, Bazar Veng, Lawngtlai; Amount - ₹7.40 lakh.
   iv) Construction of PCC Pavement from Nimaichandro House – Primary School at Ngunlinga Khua; Worker – F. Lalkaisanga, Bazar Veng, Lawngtlai; Amount - ₹4.50 lakh.

c) Under the Construction of Mautlang – Baroguisuri (Length = 5.00 km), the work done are as follows:
   i) Construction of Culvert at Berena Tuikhur – College Veng Road, Lawngtlai; Worker – F. Lalkaisanga, Bazar Veng, Lawngtlai; Amount - ₹8.00 lakh.
   ii) Widening of road from Paithar to Sihtlangpui; Worker – F. Lalkaisanga, Bazar Veng, Lawngtlai; Amount - ₹20.00 lakh.
   iii) Construction of Link Road from Upper Saikah 'L'; Worker – F. Lalkaisanga, Bazar Veng, Lawngtlai; Amount - ₹5.00 lakh.
   iv) Construction of Retaining Wall at College Veng, Lawngtlai; Worker – F. Lalkaisanga, Bazar Veng, Lawngtlai; Amount - ₹9.00 lakh.
   v) Construction of Link Road from Chawngtlangpui to Khuailuichhuah; Worker – F. Lalkaisanga, Bazar Veng, Lawngtlai; Amount - ₹75 lakh.

Pu Speaker, must I answer the other questions?

SPEAKER : Let us stick to *Starred Question No.* 103 and I invite Pu C. Ngunlianchunga to ask *Supplementary questions*.

PU. C. NGUNLIANCHUNGA: Pu Speaker, before I ask further questions, I hope the Minister has the copy of my additional questions. With regards to *Starred Question No.* 109, my *Supplementary questions* are –

i) Has the work been started? Are they satisfactory?
ii) Under the new government, does the PWD Minister –
iii) Take any measures for quality control?

iv) Have any future provisions for works monitoring?

Pu Speaker, of late, there has been a concerning number of restricted tenders and the works mentioned by the PWD Ministers are of the same. The work in 37-Lawngtlai 'W' Constituency also seems to look like a 'money making' measure as it has been done by a single contractor. My question then is what measures will be taken in the case of unsatisfactory work? The outgoing government (hope my friends turn a blind eye) has some concerning issues during election years which made it clear that 'money is not the ticket to winning'. Despite not distributing SASCI, SEDP, rickshaw permit and two-wheeler permit, the government today stands still.

Lastly, my question is – with respect to SASCI and PWD maintenance, does the government stand strong in its pre-election motivations in terms of quality control, works monitoring and restricted tender? Has all the work been started? Has it been finished? Thank you.

SPEAKER **:** I may now invite Pu H. Ginzalala, the Champhai North MLA to ask *Supplementary questions*.

PU H. GINZALALA **:** Pu Speaker, thank you. My questions are –

i) The roads between Khawzawl and Rabung have been deteriorating for many years now and I ask the government if there are any provisions in re-building of the roads?

ii) Champhai and its attributed areas have extremely impoverished roads. Could the government initiate actions regarding this issue?

iii) The roads between Vapar and Ngurlen have been re-conditioned through PMGSY without black-topping. This road is extremely significant as it is the main road to Ngurlen Sactuary with a lot of foreign visitors and tourists in and outside the State.

iv) Could black-topping of the roads be completed?

v) The PWD is responsible for constructing highways. The previous government promised to build straight roads, but instead, our roads are winding and full of curves. Straight roads are an important aspect of sustainable parameter, so what is the current government planning to do about this issue?

Thank you, Pu Speaker.

SPEAKER **:** I invite Pu R. Rohmingliana, Thorang MLA to ask *Supplementary questions*.

PU R. ROHMINGLIANA: Pu Speaker, thank you. This is my first time being elected as an MLA and my knowledge regarding the rules of the House is limited, thus, I submit myself to your supervision. Since the Starred question is extensive, the *Supplementary questions* are also quite numerous. I request the PWD Minister to note down my questions and if he is unable to answer all my questions, I request him to provide me the answers in writing. My questions are:

i) Can SASCI 2023-2024 lapse?

ii) If it is lapsable, what is the stance of the government?

iii) Does the government consider it a good idea to borrow SASCI loan that will be paid off after 50 years without interest?

iv) Does the government have an awareness of the fact that there are works under SASCI that have qualified tenders, appointed contractors with Letter of Acceptance (LoA) and signed agreement but the EE orders to halt the work verbally?

v) Certain contractors were ordered by the EE through verbal communication to work only on some parts of the agreed tenders. Is this a command of the government? Has the PWD instruct the EE through written communication?

vi) If the above answer is true, then is this a way of having backdoor politics between the EE and the government?

vii) If the work is delayed and the contractor alleged the EE to be the hindrance, an extension of time should be given to the work. Will this be denied by the government?

viii) Has the SASCI money during 2023-2024 be given to the UC for sanctioning?

ix) The present contactors are continuing their work. If the ongoing funds get lapsed, will it be fulfilled through the new funds?

x) Has the sanctioned SASCI funds released to the state implementing boartd in the last 10 years? (**Pu C. Lalsawivunga, Minister:** Pu Speaker, the questions are too extensive for the Minster to note down each and every one…)

Pu Speaker, if I go against the law, please enlighten me in this regard.

xi) Is the SASCI loan guidelines effectively implemented?

xii) Is it correct that Contractors will re-sign a 53% supplementary agreement?

xiii) Is it true that the Bill of Quantity (BOQ) are reconstructed by the Department?

xiv) Does the government plan to clear all the interest deposit certificate and utilization certificate this year?

xv) The 1st installment of SASCI fund ₹46,254.9793 lakh received on 6.9.2023 is to be utilized by 31.3.2024. Will this be fully utilized? If not utilized, what is the plan of the government?

xvi) If the present fund is not fully utilized, will it affect the 2nd installment of the year 2024-2025?

xvii) Our Chief Minister has said that the PWD control division will be attached with the CMO, has this been implemented? Pu Speaker, thank you.

SPEAKER : That was quite elongated. The Minister shall not be condemned if he is unable to answer every question in this session. Although three questions have been asked, I would like to invite the BJP Group Leader, Dr. K. Beichhua, the Siaha MLA to ask his questions.

DR. K. BEICHHUA : Pu Speaker, thank you. I have previously asked about the work of SASCI in *Starred Question No.* 3. There are numerous works that have not been started. Will these be cancelled? If not, what is teh future plan? Thank you.

SPEAKER : That was quite precise. When questions are asked, it is advisable to ask only those that could be immediately reacted for the interest for the House. With regard to the questions of Tuirial MLA about the ICT on the issue of ‘invited tender’ or ‘tender bidders’, I have received the original script. The question in paper says “How many tender bidders are accepted under Open and Restricted tender?” which might be a typing error.

I may now invite the PWD Minister to answer whatever he could and provide a written answer for the rest that could not be answered today.

PU VANLALHLANA, MINISTER: Pu Speaker, scores of questions have been asked and let me try to answer whatever I could.

To answer Pu Ngunlianchunga’s question – As of now, there has not been a lot of work done for Chawngte to Bungtlang South World Bank Road, however surveys and detailed estimates have been initiated.

In response to Pu Ginzalala’s question – It is unfortunate that the current government inherited poor and impoverished roads which made me wonder what the previous government did to solve this issue. The road between Khawzawl and Rabung is also a case in point.

To react to Pu R. Rohimhliana’s question – SASCI is a national loan policy, called the “Special Assistance to State for Capital Investment.” A total sum of 500 crore has been received and PWD is the main beneficiary with Sorts, Health and Tourism Department. The main reason why SASCI becomes controversial is due to the fact that the funds were release right before the election on 6.10.2023 which affected the work due to model code of conduct. Prior to this, agreements have been signed and Letter to proceed to work have been released for some projects which all got affected. The SASCI fund has been allegedly mentioned in the utilization of election campaign funds rather than asset creations and investments.

PU R. ROHMINGLIANA: Pu Speaker, Point of Clarification – could the Minister provide answers rather than explaining the cases. (**Speaker:** Let the Minister will continue his answers…)

PU VANLALHLANA, MINISTER: I will answer your question. As I investigated further, I find certain discrepancies. For example: 340 lakhs have been received for ‘Construction of football field at Maubawk’ which included construction of Maubawk field, Dam veng – Maubawk linkage, BSUP Complex Lawipu, volleyball court and middle school playground.

Under ‘Construction of approach road from Parvatui to Zopui 6kms’, the works included are Phaileng village, Dilzawl, Pukzing, Parvatui, Tuahzawl, Rulpuihlim, Ailawng, West Lungdar and Khawrihnim. These does not include asset creations.

In the new government, new people want to work for contracts and receive work orders. However, as directed by our leader, Chef Minister, the government have decided not to cancel the previously agreements and sanctioned orders as this goes against the ethos of new government.

Additionally, as instructed by the Finance Department, the sanctioned expenditure ₹266 lakhs should be utilized before 31st March and all future works should be included in this sanction as we will not receive the 2nd installment most likely. Thus, the prior sanctioned works and agreements will be continued despite being in the new government. Thus, we will prioritize the works that have been accepted and on-going and will include future works in the 1st installment. I believe this is a grate step to good governance.

We have given immense importance to Quality Control of the projects. I myself have visited the concerned office and see that we have well-equipped machines but lack in manpower. I want to re-iterate that quality control is the responsibility of all the MLAs. Our Chief Minister has even instituted a Monitoring Committee and through this, necessary steps will be taken for defective and unsatisfactory works.

With respect to black-toppings of the roads, they have been done under the previous PMGSY. This will be continued in the upcoming PMGSY-4. Pu Speaker, I believe I have answered the questions sufficiently.

SPEAKER : Would you also answer the questions posed by Pu Dr. K. Beichhua?

PU VANLALHLANA, MINISTER: With the on-going sanctioned expenditure, we will try to complete all the pending and accepted works under the 53% expenditure sanction. (**Pu R. Rpohmingliana:** Pu Speaker, Point of clarification…)

Our leader has vehemently opposed restricted tenders and advised the invitation of only open tenders. However, there may arise a case where restricted tenders are necessary according to the laid down rules and regulations. Our leader has also instructed us to let him aware in such cases.
…(interruption)…

PU R. ROHMINGLIANA: Pu Speaker, my question was not regarding the importance of PWD Quality Control, rather I want to know if it has been attached to the CMO. I also requested the Minister to answer the other questions in writing.

PU VANLALHLANA, MINISTER: I could not note down all the questions to even answer in writing. (**Pu R. Rohmingliana:** Pu Speaker, I can give to him in writing.) That is all from my end, Pu Speaker.

SPEAKER : I may invite the House Leader to speak on the matter.

LALDUHOMA, CHIEF MINISTER: Pu Speaker, thank you. To supervise these works, Project Monitoring Committee has been instituted with representatives from all parties. This made it possible to enable citizen centric government. To enable this effectively, Quality Control Division has been commenced and they have started working.

I also want to clarify that we have not cancelled any previously sanctioned SASCI work orders and no Bill of Quantity was signed. However, under the name of a single contractor, there are numerous party workers where works are delegated. Some have started working while others do not and all these are deemed to be on-going as it is under a single contactor. However, there have been unsatisfactory and delay of works and thus we cannot submit utilization certificate as it will lapse in this financial year; all these will affect our 2nd installment ... *(interruption)*...

PU LALRINTLUANGA SAILO: Pu Speaker, point of clarification – Duration of work is available in the work order or Letter of acceptance which cannot be altered whenever possible. Also, utilization certificate is not necessary as in the case of PMGSY projects. Can the government not take actions in order to evade lapsing of the project?

PU LALDUHOMA, CHIEF MINISTER: Pu Speaker, as this is not our State Fund, it has part I and II with definite periods. Thus, we do not believe in issuing utilization certificate for works which have not been completed. OI am afraid that we would not be able to process the Bills if the works are unsatisfactory or not up to the standards.

PU R. ROHMINGLIANA: Pu Speaker, Point of clarification, please – the works were to be resumed after the expiration of model cod of conduct; however, the E.E gave verbal instructions to hold back its continuation.

PU LALDUHOMA, CHIEF MINISTER: They shall continue their work effectively and efficiently in a fast pace manner. I hope all contractors take note on this. All the on-going works are being approved by the pervious government. There was a question regarding unsatisfactory work which might affect the next year SASCI funds. I hope not as we already received ₹500 crore till today.

SPEAKER : We shall move on to *Starred Question No.* 104, let the Siaha MLA, Pu Dr. K. Beichhua be invited to ask questions.

***Starred Question No.* 104** – Regarding Thosai Field Artificial Turf.

DR. K. BEICHHUA : Pu Speaker, thank you. My questions to the UD&PA Department is –

“Has there been an official inauguration of Thosai artificial turf? If not, what is the reason?”

SPEAKER : I invite the UD&PA Minister, Pu K. Sapdanga to answer the questions.

PU K. SAPDANGA, MINISTER: Pu Speaker, my answer is –

“Thorang Artificial Turf has not been opened. The work has been completed and formal inauguration is on the horizon.”

SPEAKER : I invite Dr. K. Beichhua to ask *Supplementary questions*.

DR. K. BEICHHUA : Pu Speaker, thank you. The Thorang field is extremely huge and I believe that it could be utilized for numerous activities and not just football. However, the artificial turf installed is barely a ‘minimum-standard size’ and it could not be utilized effectively. My *Supplementary questions* are –

i) Who is the contractor? How much is the project cost? Hs the Bill been processed?

ii) Has the work for Siaha Meisatla field gallery started? How much is the project cost? When will it be completed?

SPEAKER : Let the Tuichawng MLA, Pu Rasik Mohan Chakma be invited to ask *Supplementary questions*.

PU RASIK MOHAN CHAKMA: Pu Speaker, my question is –

What is the process of Town declaration? What are the criteria under town-declaration for UD&PA? Despite being a district, Chawngte ‘L’ and ‘P’ are under the same town with a population of more than 23,000. What is the reason for non-declaration of Chawngte into a town?

SPEAKER : Let the UD&PA Minister, Pu K. Sapdanga be invited to answer whatever he could.

PU K. SAPDANGA, MINISTER: Pu Speaker, to answer to the first question, I believe there are differences in determining what is a large field. The Thosai field is not considered to be large enough to play even a football match and that adds to the reason for the delay in official opening of the field.

The contractor is Gallant Sports Infra Pvt. Ltd., Gurgaon, Haryana. The estimated amount is ₹395.535334 lakhs. I hope the answer is sufficient. (**Dr. K. Beichhua:** Pu Speaker, it is not completed. Has the Bill been process? And my second question is not answered.)

SPEAKER : Yes, please; Question and Answer time is over. *Supplementary questions* often posed a difficulty as the concerned Minister is not always equipped with the necessary details.

May we invite the concerned Minister to finish answering the question? Let him answer whatever he could and the remaining answers could be provided in writing.

PU K. SAPDANGA, MINISTER: Pu Speaker, thank you. Thosai field Bill has not been process yet, we are still waiting for the final bill. It was apart of the previous NEDP and SEDP Scheme.

PU C. NGUNLIANCHUNGA: Pu Speaker, the bill is not concerned only for the field. If the final Bill has not been given due to the field not large enough, is there any provision in upgradation of the said field?

PU K. SAPDANGA, MINISTER: 'It is in process' is my answer. Moving on, I am not able to answer questions with respect to the Siaha Meisatla field. With regards to town declaration, I shall answer it in writing to the Minister. Thank you.

PU LALNGHINGLOVA HMAR, MINISTER: Pu Speaker, if you allow me, could I please clarify regarding the football ground?

SPEAKER : What shall we do? Sports Minister wants to clarify on the matter. (House agrees…) Please clarify.

PU LALNGHINGLOVA HMAR, MINISTER: Pu Speaker, there are many international criterions to in the determination of football fields. The minimum accepted size is 45x90sq. meters and maximum size allowed is 90x120 sq. meters. Usually, it is 105x68 sq. meters is used as a norm. Thosai field is way smaller than the norm as is with the fields under Smart City project which are smaller than 105x68 sq. meters.

For example: A sum of ₹20 crore has been kept for a ground that is the size of 95x52 sq. meters which is way too much. After deliberations, fields at Zemabawk, Tuivamit, Edenthar, and Chite is in the process of enlarging in size to meet the standards.

Since we live in a hilly region, all field could not attain its required size. However the government is trying its best to meet the minimum standards. Over estimating of budgets for the small grounds posed many difficulties. Thank you.

SPEAKER : I extend my thanks to the Sports Minister for the clarifications.

LAYING OF PAPERS

Now we shall move on to Laying of Papers. Let me invite the honourable House Leader to lay on the Table of the House a copy of each of the following:

i) 'The 17th Annual Report 2022-2023 of Mizoram Information Commission' and,
ii) 'The Economic Survey 2023-2024 under Planning & Programme Implementation Department.'

PU LALDUHOMA, CHIEF MINISTER: Pu Speaker, with your permission, I lay on the Table of the House a copy of each of the following:

i) 'The 17th Annual Report 2022-2023 of Mizoram Information Commission' and,
ii) 'The Economic Survey 2023-2024 under Planning & Programme Implementation Department.'

SPEAKER : The copies may be distributed. Let me invite Pu F. Rodingliana, Power & Electricity Department Minister to lay on the Table of the House a copy of the following:

'The 14th Annual Report 2021-2022 of Joint Electricity Regulatory Commission (JERC) for Manipur and Mizoram'.

PU F. RODINGLIANA, MINISTER: Pu Speaker, with your permission, I lay on the Table of the House a copy of the following:

'The 14th Annual Report 2021-2022 of Joint Electricity Regulatory Commission (JERC) for Manipur and Mizoram'.

PRESENTATION OF REPORT

SPEAKER : The copies may be distributed.

The *Business Advisory Committee* had a meeting yesterday February 28, 2024 wherein the detail programmes of the ongoing 2nd Session of the 9th Mizoram Legislative Assembly are re-organized. I have distributed the same through Bulletin Part-II last evening. I thereby present the Business Advisory Committee Report in the House. The copies may be distributed.

LEGISLATIVE BUSINESS:

We shall now move on to Legislative. I now invite Pu B. Lalchhanzova, Minister to request an introduction of the Govt. Bill –

'The Indian Stamp (Mizoram Amendment) Bill, 2024'.

PU B. LALCHHANZOVA, MINISTER: Pu Speaker, thank you. I request an introduction of the Bill –

'The Indian Stamp (Mizoram Amendment) Bill, 2024'.

SPEAKER : The owner of the Bill has requested the introduction of the Bill? Do we approve? (House approves…)**.** The Minister may introduce and move the said Bill.

PU B. LALCHHANZOVA, MINISTER: Pu Speaker, thank you. I feel immensely glad to introduce 'The Indian Stamp (Mizoram Amendment) Bill, 2024' in the House. This is an important Bill. Pu Speaker, in the preparation of this Bill, numerous efforts and advices were gathered from inside and outside the State and from my department itself.

Pu Speaker, I would like to mention the unending concern from our Chief Minister regarding this issue. The Bill has been previously approved by the Cabinet on 5.2.2024. The importance of this Bill cannot be overstated especially for the youth, competitive exam students, and even parents. To decipher the Bill, 'Stamp Duty' consists of two important factors. Firstly, it includes an individual dealing with the government such as 'deed of agreement', marriage certifications, 'non-judicial paper' where the government printed its stamp. The concerned Bill today deals with stamps of 'immoveable property' such as buying and selling lands, bank mortgages, gifting of lands etc.

Pu Speaker, the Bill that I introduced has been used in India even from the British era and has been an instrumental for governance. It was started in 1869 under The Indian Stamp Act, amended in 1879 and thus the present main Act is called 'The Indian Stamp Act, 1899'. As for Mizoram, it was introduced as 'The Indian Stamp Act, (Mizoram Amendment),1995', however passed in year 1997.

The Constitution Article 246, Clause 2 allow for the collection of Stamp duty. The Stamp Act comes under List 1,2 and 3. List 1- Item no. 91 is the power of the Union to collect Stamp duties, List 2 – Item no. 63 concerned with the State and List 3 – Item no. 44 is the enabler of the amendment we have today. The rates can be revised by the State through Entry no. 63.

Pu Speaker, there has been 5 amendments with regard to Stamp duty in Mizoram such as 1995, 2007, 2016, 2019 and 2023. The Bill that I introduced in the 9th Legislative Assembly is thusly called "The Indian Stamp (Mizoram Amendment) Bill, 2024" and this is the 6th amendment of the Act.

Pu Speaker, our State has been growing and developing day by day, but there are certain populations that fears Stamp duties. However, as a State with one of the highest literacy rates, we should examine and understand the nature of the Act. It has been utilized in every State of India.

Pu Speaker, I believe my fellow members will agree with me when I say that real estate and land prices are soaring high today, sometimes beyond belief. With effective implementation of this Act, Valuation Committee can better monitor land valuation and accordingly name the price of the land. This will keep in check the prices of the land for the interest of all.

Pu Speaker, I was informed by a Mizo IAS officer working outside the State that Stamp duty has been already so high and the masses are well informed on this regard. I applaud the ZPM government for taking such a bold step in bringing in this Amendment in the House today.

The amendments proposed today is under Article Schedule 1 – Article 18, 23, 33, 40 and 54. Pu Speaker, as previously mentioned by our Chief Minister in his Budget speech that Stamp duty will be revised to 3% and 2.5% for women. This is a great step towards women empowerment and a milestone for Mizoram.

Pu Speaker, Certificate of Sale comes under Article no. 18. Certificate of Sale means – when an individual provides their land or property as a collateral in a bank or any institutions through a Stamp duty and when such properties are to be taken back after the term, a Certificate of Sale is issued by the bank/institution through a Stamp duty. Following the property instrument process, the individual would receive an interest payment which is 2.5% for widows and 3% for 'any other case'.

Pu Speaker, Article 23 covers Conveyance (selling lands). When a parcel of land is sold, the buyer will have to give Stamp duty which is 2.5% for widows and 3% for 'any other case'.

Article 33 deals with Gifts which has Part A and B. If the gift is outside the respective family, the receiver shall a give Stamp duty which is 2.5% for widows and 3% for 'any other case'. However, if the gift is within the sphere of the family, the Stamp duty cannot exceed ₹5000/-.

Pu Speaker, Article 40 is branching out as Part A and B which deals with Mortgages. These are of two types. The first one is called 'position' mortgages wherein the ownership of the property is also transferred with it and a Stamp duty shall be given which is 2.5% for widows and 3% for 'any other case'

Article 40(B) talks about mortgages 'without position'. These are collaterals or mortgages without transferring the ownership. The Stamp duty will be 1% of the value of the property and should not exceed ₹1000/-.

Pu Speaker, Article 54 is concerning with – Reconveyance of Mortgage Property. Whenever one is taking back the mortgages according to the law, a Stamp duty of ₹1000 should be given in the case of the mortgage value not higher than ₹5000/-. However, in 'any other case', a Stamp duty of ₹2000 should be given, and this amount cannot be exceeded in any circumstances.

Pu Speaker, as mentioned earlier, I have made a considerable number of efforts in understanding the workings of Stamp duty in other States, especially the North-Eastern region. Through inquiry of Gazetted Notifications, I and my fellow mates in the Department have tried our absolute best. The Assam State took 1-3% with concessions for women, where Tripura took 3%. Pu Speaker, I shall elaborate on how Meghalaya imposed Stamp duty – if the mortgage value is under ₹50,000, the Stamp duty is at 4.6% whereas if the mortgage value lies between ₹50,000 - ₹90,000, it is 6%. In the case of valuation below ₹1.5 lakhs, the Stamp duty is 8% and if it is above ₹1.5 lakhs, the Stamp duty is set at 9.9%.

Pu Speaker, I am convinced that the introduction of this amendment Bill is an awareness for all. The Meghalaya Act has the phrase 'for consideration' which means that the buyer and the seller of the properties engage in the transaction with full awareness of the Stamp duty and state percentages that have to be paid by the buyers.

Pu Speaker, I consider this to be an important aspect of this Act. If this could be implemented, it would resolve a considerable number of discrepancies that arises during transactions as most of the problems that we faced today are due to lack of knowledge and unawareness of such Act.

The state of Nagaland imposed 4.5% while Sikkim has a different approach. In Sikkim, individuals originated from Sikkim have to pay 5% while all the others have to pay 10%. Arunachal, like Assam imposed a Stamp duty of 1-3%.

Pu Speaker, the amendments that I introduced today comes under Schedule I, Article 5. For the general awareness of the members for discussions, I believe it is important to understand the difference between 'stamp duty' and 'registration fee'. The former relates with the Stamp Duty, 1899 while the latter comes under Indian Registration Act, 1908. Registration fee is a mandatory fee given when the buyer of the property registers the transaction to the competent authority. This stands at 0.5% and is not a part of the amendment.

Pu Speaker, today I find immense pleasure in being the person to introduce and move the Bill "The Indian Stamp (Mizoram Amendment) Bill, 2024 in the House. I sincerely hope that all my fellow Members understand the significance of this Bill for the State and for the future generations and refrain from criticizing it unnecessarily.

The 2016 stamp duty amends the rate at 2% which was supposed to come into effect on 31st March, 2016. Despite the efforts of the Congress government (let me say, Pu C. Ngunlianchhunga's government), the people that sits at your left today vehemently opposed the amendments. Thus, suspend order for the amendment was released on 2nd November, 2016.

Pu Speaker, as our State is growing at a fast pace manner today, I believe this amendment is on the right path. As we all know, the first-timer MLAs in this new government attend a Parliamentarian training session in Delhi between 16th-23rd January, Pu Speaker, you were also present. I noticed that it was rather humiliating when they depict the condition of revenue collections of different States and to see our State in such a dilapidate manner. During those times, our House Leader, our Chief minister Pu Lalduhoma used to connect with me through a phone call and encouraged me to think harder for Mizoram and its people.

Additionally, Pu Speaker, the stamp duty is not concerned with our day-to-day business but it related to formal transactions between two parties i.e., the buyer and the seller. It is important to note that moveable properties such as our car and furniture might be our possession but the land is owned by the government which is then given to the people through LSC, House Pass and Periodic pattas.

Thus, if the land is owned by the government, we give revenues to the government for those transactions of ownerships.

Pu Speaker, I find it brilliant that it is called a 'duty' as it is truly our responsibility as a good citizen to pay our dues when such transactions take place.

Pu Speaker, I think it would be great if the people who pay stamp duties see it as an honourable duty so as to encouraged others to do the same. I would like to re-iterate the concept of 'of consideration' employed by Meghalaya state.

The buyer of the properties that have to pay the stamp duty will; receive certifications of payment. I am not aware of the legal aspect but I am of the opinion that the seller and the buyer will negotiate the price of the properties so that the buyer will be able to pay the stamp duty with ease.

Adding on, Pu Speaker, the citizens today are concerned and worried with the utilization of public funds. This leads to a heightened hesitation in the paying of taxes and duties by the people. I assure the people that the money received through duties and taxes will be responsibly utilized for the State and its citizens. Thus, I am happy to introduce this Bill today in front of the House members.

The moment I was appointed to head the Revenue Department, I put on my thinking cap and ponder about why people do not trust the government with their taxes and fees and the consequential hesitation in paying of such taxes. Thus, Pu Speaker, I promise myself not to engage in unethical actions during my tenure and I have declared in the House that my family and I will not procure even one inch of land through power and authority.

Pu Speaker, as seen in Rome 13:7, “If you owe taxes, pay taxes; if revenue, then revenue; if respect, then respect; if honour, then honour” it is paramount that as citizens, we do our duty by paying taxes, fees, etc.

Pu Speaker, the rationale behind paying of taxes and duties is that it is important for poverty alleviation and development of the underprivileged. The level of poverty is always low in countries where people pay taxes and duties diligently. If taxes are paid determinedly, it will ease the functions of the government that has increased old age pension to ₹1000. Our medical bills will also reach the targeted population on time thereby relieving distressed patients and their family. Additionally, it will help the government in formulating more schemes for the disadvantaged sections of the society. Pu Speaker, as advised to me by certain Delhi officers, it would be beneficial if we strengthen our tax collection system and have enormous funds for 10% state-matching share which will welcome many projects in various sectors. Our budget as presented by the Chief Minister for the year 2024-2025 is around ₹14000 crore. Thus, if we can have a matching share of ₹1440 crore, we would easily receive an amount as large as our budget.

I have been entrusted with recovering around ₹30 crore under the Land Revenue & Settlement Department from stamp duty and various taxes. We will strengthen Land Valuation Committee and we have an on-going work by the Sub-Register Settlement Officer at Aizawl, Lunglei, Serchhip, Champhai, Kolasib and Mamit district. It is non-functional at Saitual, Hnahthial and Khawzawl as of now.

Before I introduce the Bill, our House Leader and I have discussed on how to bolster our stamp duty collections and strengthen the Land Revenue Administration – Inspector General of Registration (IGR) posts and equipped with better human resources.

Thus, Pu Speaker, I move ‘The Indian Stamp (Mizoram Amendment) Bill, 2024’ in the House for consideration. Thank you.

SPEAKER : The Minister has elaborated on the nature and importance of the said Amendment Bill. Is there any member who would like to contribute to it?

I invite Pi Lalrinpuii to contribute to the discussion. 5 minutes each shall be given.

PI LALRINPUII, MINISTER: Pu Speaker, thank you. I believe that this Amendment Bill is a great step by the Minister of Land Revenue & Settlement and I support it in letter and spirit.

A strong government requires concrete revenue system. It is a known fact that due to financial constraints; the government has been held back in a lot of areas. I, therefore credit the government in taking such a bold step in revamping the Stamp and

Registration Act. Although the present amendment does not alter the registration fee, the interconnectedness cannot be undermined.

Even before Independence, we have the Indian Stamp Act, 1899 and the Registration Act, 1908 under which the IGR&S have done applaudable works. For the longest time, it was not seen as a full-fledged tax and has been the second most important sources of tax after sales tax and commercial tax.

Mizoram is a late-comer in this regard. I would like to highlight how different States utilized their revenue from the Stamp and Registration Act.

It was from 1997 that this Act have been introduced in Mizoram which a humble beginning under the Law Department. From 2010-2011, with the initiative of our abled officers, there were actions with regard to strengthening this Act for more revenues.

In a nutshell, the then Chief Minister, Pu Lal Thanhawla inaugurate the Directorate of Stamp & Registration on September 27, 2013. Prior to this, 18 staff members have come to Karnataka (while I was in Bangalore) from the Revenue Department to study the workings of other states as the newly inaugurated Department does not have any employees. Despite the government providing 35 posts for the Directorate, it lays vacant till today.

If we ponder about the necessity of revenues from stamp and registration, I would also request the Opposition Bench put their mind into it. As we all know, Mizoram has a tight financial crunch and our state revenue is extremely limited. We have been relying on Central funds and Financial Commission devolutions and one of the most important factors is the 'Tax & Fiscal Efforts' which is why the Stamp & Registration is crucial. The 15th Finance Commission Report has a negative perception of the State revenue from Stamp & Registration. We have to take necessary steps in reforming and strengthening the Stamp & Registration Directorate. I believe we are wilfully stagnant from the view of the Finance Commission.

Therefore, I request all the Members to support this Bill as it is a step in the right direction. Pu Speaker, thank you.

SPEAKER **:** I invite the Champhai South MLA, Lt. Col. Clement Lalhmingthanga to comment on the Bill.

LT. COL. CLEMENT LALHMINGTHANGA: Pu Speaker, thank you. I too believe that this Bill is a step in the right direction. The increase from 1% to 3% is admirable as other States and North East States have also a rate as high as 7%, 5% and 4.5%.

As mentioned in the name, Stamp duty is a duty of the citizens. If our revenue and tax collection increases, the government can implement better schemes for the impoverished sections of the society. The higher the tax collection, the better resources exist for achieving good governance.

As stated earlier, we have high dependence on funding from the Central government. To receive more funding, an important condition is the performance of Own Tax Collection of the respective states. There are certain people who discourage other by stating that giving tax is a burden of the citizen which is highly problematic.

The proposed Bill is not a burden for the poor. It is a duty mostly levied upon rich individuals with high cost of property transactions. It is to be noted that all these taxes will be used for our state – funding development, constructing better roads infrastructure which will be an important asset. Thus, by taxing certain populations, it will uplift the downtrodden sections of our society.

Therefore, to have better land evaluation system and equitable re-distribution of land and resources, I fully support the Bill. Pu Speaker, thank you.

SPEAKER **:** I now invite the Mamit MLA, Pu H. Lalzirliana to comment on the Bill.

PU H. LALZIRLIANA **:** Pu Speaker, thank you. I am glad to see the hard work that goes behind the proposed Amendment Bill by our Minister.

Many deliberations have taken place in this House regarding this topic from ages. I believe everyone support this move in principle; the justifications provided for the necessity of the Bill was also quite convincing. However, our target audience is the Mizo people whose mentality towards giving tax is negative. I have thoroughly gone through the Bill and I suspect that the increase from 1% to 3% is a 200% rise which is deemed to be extremely high. I believe that incremental increases from 2% and then to 2.5% would be more acceptable. Since the Bill render priorities to widows, the rates could be dropped to 1% instead of 2.5%.

We have to adjust our value system as a whole. If we are a government employee, we have to give 30% Income Tax which is mandatory. The more pay we receive, the more tax we give.

We are discussing about Stamp duty which will be a good revenue generator in the future. However, it is a hard pill to swallow when our government's election campaign theme was 'minimal increasing in taxes'. But our main concern is the public and I believe every Member of this House agrees to this Bill. Some alleged that if we increase taxes, our tithes in the church will be declining. Anyway, this Bill is necessary in fostering a responsible citizen.

Moreover, petrol and diesel bought from Assam expensively are sold at a cheaper rate in our State. This lies under the State subject and could be used to harbour more revenues. I suggest that the altered percentage and the concept of 'market value' should be reviewed. If I am not wrong, Aizawl belongs to B-Class in Classes of cities and our other towns are under C-Class or Unclassified city.

As the owner of the Bill stated, it seems like there are no coherent market value system today. I believe and hope that the market value in the Bill goes in tandem with the Classification of cities. Pu Speaker, thank you.

SPEAKER : Alright, let the Siaha MLA, Dr. K. Beichhua be invited to comment on the Bill.

DR. K. BEICHHUA : Pu Speaker, thank you. When I go through the Bill and see the word 'widow', I feel immense gladness in the initiative of our government. I admire the government for such actions. I hope I am correct when I say that the stamp act is a way of generating revenue through papers and documents. It is important to understand that this not just a duty but point towards 'revenue and tax' which is of utmost importance for the development of the State.

To discuss further on the amendments, specifically 'Certificate of Sale' under Schedule 1 – Article 18, which proposed a duty rate of 2.5% for widows and 3% for others states practice is also that the mover put it in the reference. Assam was also 1 - 3%. Assam does not use the word 'widow' but 'woman'. Therefore, this Act which was in force since 1889 during the British era has been amended by the Government according to the characteristics of the people and the state. Mizoram also amended it five times and the last was in 2023. The first thing the new Government did was to introduce an amendment and I was wondering if this revenue is increased because of the financial crisis. The reason why we cannot compare ourselves with other states is that Meghalaya has been in existence for a long time and we do not know how long this State Act has been in force and how many times it has been amended. How many times have they amended it slowly to reach 4% or 5% and I do not think they increased it all at once. So are Tripura, Arunachal and other states.

Therefore, let us examine Article 18 of the Certificate of Sale. Widow's rate increased by 2.5% from 1% and as mentioned earlier, the increase was substantial. Non-widows increased by 3%. Therefore, as this was amended to suit the State's position and the people, I was wondering if the spirit is missed. Article 23 is also the same where Conveyance rate is 2.5% for widow and 3% for others. So, it would be appreciated if this is reviewed.

In case of Article 33- Gift, it should not be more than ₹500 for family members but it has increased to ₹5000. So, the sudden increase is a burden for the people. Do we have a market valuer in our State? If so, who is the market valuer?

SPEAKER : I request Pu T. Lalhlimpuia.

PU T. LALHLIMPUIA : Land Revenue Minister Pu B. Lalchhanzova has introduced this important Bill today and this will help us in developing and progressing our state. As per the Stamp Duty Act, 1899, other States have taken the Stamp Duty Regulation according to the socio-economic context of the State. So, we should know if the previous government did it or not depending on our socio-economic situation. Since it is difficult to acquire lands in a city in other states, it went like a real estate business. As it is a matter for the State, relaxation can be decided by this State at any time and many states relaxed stamp duty during Covid-19. Then, when real estate businesses are about to collapse, that is how the government pushes them instead.

Today, I would like to point out that this is our economic duty and 'transfer of resources from rich people to weaker section of the society' will be through this stamp duty. Stamp duty in other states is progressive where Progressive is 3% below ₹50 lakh, 3.5% between ₹50-75 lakh, 4% above and 5% above ₹1 crore. The Revenue Minister's proposal is also being implemented in Bihar and let us briefly mention the benefits. We will now have a proper land valuer in this regard because land valuation is required. If there is a proper land value, loans can be taken easily with that value and the mortgage values will also be increased. Other states economies are growing because it is clear that many things could be done in the state matching share. Property lands in the city is so expensive that it is already difficult for the poor and the middle-income groups. Land valuation will be used to measure the value of the land and prevent the price of land from being too high. Although our Minister did not make the suggestion in this regard, compensation should be considered. I agree and support Stamp Act, 1899 schedule 1, 18, 23, 33, 40 and 54. Thank you.

SPEAKER : I request Pu TBC Lalvenchhunga. (*interruption*)

PU LALCHHANDAMA RALTE, OPP. LEADER: Pu Speaker, we are very interested in the discussion but since the important programs are still at 1:00 PM, is it better to rest first and then continue at 2:00 PM? I am reminding you of the 1:00 PM program at the Governor's office.

SPEAKER : What is the opinion of the House? I request our House Leader.

PU LALDUHOMA, CHIEF MINISTER: We should rest and continue at 2:00 PM

SPEAKER : We will have a recess and continue at 2:00 PM

(Recess)

2:00 PM

SPEAKER : The Indian Stamp (Mizoram Amendment) Bill, 2024 is being discussed and I request Pu TBC Lalvenchhunga.

PU TBC LALVENCHHUNGA: Thank you, Pu Speaker. The Indian Stamp (Mizoram Amendment) Bill, 2024 is being discussed today and the minister who introduced the bill has expressed his interest in the bill which shows our extreme need of it. However, my apprehension is that if the people will be able to bear it. The reason why the people feel that they are not able to bear it is that we do not have a transparent government and our expenditure does not reach the people. If the Bill is passed this year, our revenue resources alone are expected to be ₹30 crore and that means, we will get that amount from the rich. The Old Age Pension Scheme has been increased by ₹1,000/- (ten times). The profit will be used for more than 25,000 elderly, vulnerable and homeless beneficiaries.

We have already mentioned that we need to generate income and basic necessities are increasing today. The Government needs revenue to equip hospitals and schools and it is impressive that the Government is trying to increase its own revenue.

Stamp duty is the biggest resource especially in Maharasthra and Karnataka (apart from GST) and we need to be brave to implement this as well. Property evaluation committees have been established by previous governments and although notified, they were always withdrawn and it is difficult to carry it out in practice. As a result, the sub-Registrar office is located in 6 out of 18 sub-Divisions and in addition to these 6 sub-divisional sub-registrars, extreme measures should also be taken on these12 sub-divisional sub-registrars. Therefore, even if we have different opinions today, we must be willing to overcome our sufferings. Thank you, Pu Speaker and I support 'The Indian Stamp (Mizoram Amendment) Bill, 2024'.

SPEAKER : I request Dr. Vanlalthlana.

DR. VANLALTHLANA, MINISTER: Thank you, Pu Speaker. The first amendment was passed in 1995 and the notification was only issued in 1997. There were some changes in 2007 and valuation committee was established in 2019. In 2023, the previous government boldly make it 1% and now, there is a plan to increase it by 3%. The finance commission made plans for tax collection. The 14th Finance Commission did not mention tax-effort but the 15th Finance Commission introduced the importance of tax-effort. It inspects whether the state takes any initiative in collecting taxes and if it cares enough. Our officials in Delhi felt that we were not doing enough and we need to make more effort.

Pu Speaker, the opposition members said that it has increased a lot. However, '₹500 is for existing buildings where it is 6% in municipal areas, 5% in transitional areas and 3% in rural areas. Previously, we used to take 6% and 5%, which is made equally to 1%. The Minister's previous proposal used 2021-22 data which showed clear revenue. In Aizawl alone, when stamp duty was collected according to the first four types, the total collection was ₹13,44,000 and 1% of the total amount is ₹ 455 lakh. The percentage increase was 3,292%. This time it has increased by 200% and even though it seems to be a lot, it is quite fair considering our needs. We are not high compared to other states. It is a burden to many people but the funds received will be used properly for the benefit of the people. I support "The Indian Stamp (Mizoram Amendment) Bill, 2024" to be passed. Thank you.

SPEAKER : I request Pu C. Ngunlianchunga.

PU C. NGUNLIANCHUNGA: Thank you, Pu Speaker. We are discussing The Indian Stamp (Mizoram Amendment) Bill, 2024 today and I was wondering if it is right to increase so much all at once. In any case, our previous leaders worked and gave their best for the development of our state. We see a huge improvement if we compare the UT era to today. There is a time for everything and it is not wrong to take steps as much as we can. The increase from 1% to 3% is too much and my opinion is to make it to at least 2%. Developed countries pay a lot of taxes and at the same time, the government also takes care of the indigenous people and they receive many benefits from the government. However, we do not have that much benefits to receive in our case. In the meantime, the previous government had dealt with this issue, and the Congress government also proposed to increase it but not suddenly at once.

There are many rich widows and so, the 2.5% increase will be a big burden for some but not for others. The Indian Stamp (Mizoram Amendment) Bill, 2024 should be reconsidered since we are all in completely different situations. There are many who do not have difficulty paying 3% but for some, this is a huge burden. A proper planning is needed for this Bill without the sudden increase to 3%. We are a poor state with no income and there is a big economic disparity and living standards between Assam and our state. So, it is inexact to compare ourselves with other states. Therefore, Pu Speaker, this Bill should be reconsidered by the Select Committee and this may even lead to even better ideas. Thank you.

SPEAKER : I request Pu Lalrintluanga Sailo.

PU LALRINTLUANGA SAILO: Thank you, Pu Speaker. The Indian Stamp (Mizoram Amendment) Bill, 2024 is impressive in principle along with the mover's preparation. However, the increase is too high as also mentioned by Pu Ngunlianchunga. The people are not rich and owning a vast land does not make a person rich as lands are inherited from their ancestors. If we are interested in revenue, we should be diligent in collecting it. We cannot compare ourselves with other states looking at our non-values. We can increase it to 2% instead of 3% or we can consider establishing a Select Committee. It is very important that we work hard to determine what we can afford and it is important to look at the situation of the poor, widows and the state.

"The Indian Stamp (Mizoram Amendment) Bill 2024" should be reconsidered carefully and a Select Committee should be formed. Thank you, Pu Speaker.

SPEAKER : I request the Leader of Opposition.

PU LALCHHANDAMA RALTE, OPP. LEADER: Thank you, Pu Speaker. The Indian Stamp (Mizoram Amendment) Bill, 2024 has been introduced by the new Government and I am pleased with the Minister's dedication. However, after much consideration, this Bill will only oppress the poor and disappoint the people. In 2016, the Congress Government decided to increase stamp duty from 1% to 2% and there were many complaints and criticisms from the public. As the largest opposition party during that time, we talked to the officials saying that the people cannot endure 2% and so The Government had revised its plan to increase. However, it is a 'tax' that must be collected from the people and we should teach the people that the more we pay taxes, the better for the people.

In the meantime, a sudden increase is too much. The Indian Stamp (Mizoram Amendment) Bill, 2024 amendment and rate fix is on the Concurrent List and our mover had also mentioned that it is on the 7th Schedule, entry 44 list-3 (Article 246, clause 2). We are not against tax increases and we only want the rates to be reviewed. The Select Committee should consider this issue and consultation should be held. This amendment affects articles 18, 23, 33, 40 and 54 under Schedule 1.

Widows who paid ₹1000 for tax will now have to pay ₹2500. In addition, Article 23 - Conveyance is also a matter of consideration. 1% of the market value is also a problem because we do not have a proper valuer. Therefore, it is good for the Government to have a proper valuer for the progress of this bill after the amendment. This is also important for us legislators to pay the right land value in our election affidavits. Regarding Article 33-Gifts, no more than ₹500/- was charged in the past but as of now, ₹5000 will be charged.

Pu Speaker, we should increase the rate slowly and it should be referred to the Select Committee. Even if it is difficult for the concerned minister to make a decision, the House Leader should intervene and we should discuss together for the sake of our people and our nation under your leadership. We should review this because the idea of raising taxes by three times (200) is too much.

In conclusion, the Indian Stamp (Mizoram Amendment) Bill, 2024 is good in principle. The tax increase is too high and should be referred to the Select Committee. Otherwise, Pu Speaker, we are very reluctant to pass this bill if it is to be passed as it is. Thank you.

SPEAKER **:** I request our House Leader if he has anything to add.

PU LALDUHOMA, CHIEF MINISTER: Pu Speaker, tax and stamp duty is a matter that should be done carefully with the nation in mind. We need to know our GSDP and growth rate and we need to look at which sectors contribute to our GSDP and how much. We also need to know how much do our laborers and our government employees contribute. The contribution of various categories of people to the GSDP is to be known. We also need to know how different our per capita incomes are and we need to level up the highs and lows. Our government is like a big family and there are those who contribute more and there are those who contribute less and there are those who need to be trained.

For example – we exempted the royalty from broomstick for the first time because the category (farmers) is not in a position to pay taxes and they need help instead. We also do not increase electricity bills because it effects the poor. We never utter about the increase or decrease of taxes. On the other hand, we strictly follow austerity measures, including discontinuation of certain facilities enjoyed by legislators earlier, to improve the state's financial condition. Therefore, it is also necessary to think about what the strongest can do to revive the weakest in regard to the economy as a whole. Our tax rate is very low just because we are exempt from income tax and Mizoram is fortunate enough for this.

Professional tax is levied from IV Grade to Chief Secretary without much differences. We cannot increase it and Constitution amendment is required to change the powers of parliament. Labor cess is our only source and our revenue is crores of rupees per month. However, it has its guidelines and we cannot spend it as we wish. So, we cannot use it except for the centrally approved purpose. Therefore, it is time for us to increase our state own tax revenue and non-tax revenue and the central government is also expecting us. We were wondering where we can increase it so that we do not suffer so much and that is where today's amendment bill comes in.

Pu Speaker, the percentage of duty taken by the states as per Google is: Arunachal- 6%, Assam- 6%, Bihar- 6%, Himachal Pradesh- 6-8%, Karnataka- 7%, Kerala and Madhya Pradesh- 8% each, Punjab, Tamil Nadu, UP- 8% and Delhi- 6%. We know that all our neighboring states also have high percentage especially Meghalaya and we are still the lowest even if we increased by 3%. The debt inheritance from the previous government is very heavy and that is why we declared Year of Consolidation. The registration fee alone is 4% in other states and as for us, we will not increase the registration fee. We feel that this has little effect on the poor and so, this Bill is introduced because this is something that we need to do. There is a chance that some people may not want to tell the true price of their land or house and they would write less to pay less stamp duty. Therefore, the government can be deceived and so, we will engage the Property Valuation Committee to prevent this from happening and to ensure that the market value is properly determined. Manpower requirements will be provided without any difficulties. There will be no deception provided that this Property Valuation Committee is in good hands. Therefore, Pu Speaker, I request every member to vote for this. Thank you.

SPEAKER : I request Pu B. Lalchhanzova, hon' Minister to windup his Bill and beg the House to pass it.

PU B. LALCHHANZOVA, MINISTER: Thank you, Pu Speaker. 'The Indian Stamp (Mizoram Amendment) Bill, 2024' is discussed by 10 members. Deep down, we all want the tax to be increased and 3% is not high compared to other states.

Pu Speaker, Stamp duty of 1% was collected from November 28th of last year and even though it was 1%, the previous government collected as 'whichever is higher'. However, as for us, we will not apply this. Regarding Dr. K. Beichhua's comments on item 33 (b), it is said that "1% of the market value of the property, subject to a maximum of ₹5,000" and so, even if the value of the land is ₹10 crore, the stamp duty cannot exceed ₹5,000/-. Pu Speaker, District Valuation Committee was established on November 9, 2020 under India Stamp Act, 1899, Act No 2 of 1899, Section 2 of Section 47 (b) where the Deputy Commissioner is the Chairman and is also called the Registrar. However, this is not managed properly and Land Valuation is not properly implemented. I am in a hurry to improve the Land Revenue (not to mention the other departments). It is the poor who suffer the most if we do not fix things. So, Pu Speaker, the bill I am introducing today will not affect the poor.

Pu Speaker, the public should know that when a citizen applies for a vacant land, the Government issued them periodic patta and house pass etc. and the government does not sell land to anyone but we give it free of charge. Stamp duty is a sign of gratitude to the government and we should be grateful as a citizen and it is a blessing to be able to give it. Our economy should be developed so that those who are unable to pay it can also pay for it. I will take responsibility and be held accountable regarding this stamp duty. It is the responsibility of the Members to leave behind a good legacy for the nation. Therefore, Pu Speaker, I am pleased to introduce the Indian Stamp (Mizoram Amendment) Bill, 2024 in the 9th Mizoram Legislative Assembly today and I beg the House to pass it. Thank you.

SPEAKER **:** Our Minister had introduced and beg the House to pass “The Indian Stamp (Mizoram Amendment) Bill, 2024”. All those members in favor may say ‘yes’ and those not in favor may say ‘no’. The House has unanimously passed “The Indian Stamp (Mizoram Amendment) Bill, 2024” (**Pu B. Lalchhanzova, Minister:** Thank you, Pu Speaker.)

Our business for today is over and I wish you all a very happy Chapchar Kut. We will continue next week that is, 4th March, 2024(Monday) at 10:30 AM.

Sitting is adjourned. **(3.03 PM)**