

REPORT ON: STUDY TOUR & REFUGEE CAMP VISIT

Written by:

**Aldrin Zothanmawia
Catherine Lalnunsangi**

(a) STUDY TOUR

Organised by the Study Tour Committee, Govt. Mizoram Law College, and funded by Higher & Technical Education Department, Govt. of Mizoram- allocating to the institution a sum of Rs 1.6 lakhs to be utilised within the 2021-2022 Academic session, exclusively for Study Tour, to be conducted within the State of Mizoram, a program '**Study Tour cum Legal Outreach, 2022**' was successfully effectuated during 25th - 28th May 2022 at Khawbung RD Block, Champhai District, Mizoram in pursuance of **Notification No.G.26039/1/2013-GMLC** Dated Aizawl, the 12th May 2022 issued by the Principal, Govt. Mizoram Law College.

Apart from four (4) transportation crew members and Tour Guide/Leader Mr. T Lalnunsiana, Asst. Prof (Part-Time), Govt. Mizoram Law College, a total of 30 students, divided into four (4) groups attended the said Tour, namely:

SL NO.	GROUP	Name
1.	1	Aldrin Zothanmawia (Leader)
2.		K Khamthianmanga
3.		T Suanliana
4.		Zodinsangi
5.		Zosangpuii
6.		B Lalremkungi
7.		Lalrindika
8.		David Lalhriatpuia

9.	2	Benjamin Lalrinsanga (Leader)
10.		James Lalawmpuia
11.		R Lalzuimawia
12.		Rudy Lalnunhlimi
13.		Caroline Ramropuii
14.		Rakil Ramtianpani
15.		Rindikmawii
16.	3	Catherine Lalmuansangi (Leader)
17.		Solomon Hrahsel
18.		Lawmawma Ralte
19.		Lalruatpuii
20.		Malsawmtluangi
21.		Lalhruaitluangi
22.		Lalruatdiki
23.	Samuel Malsawmdawngzela	
24.	4	Lawmsangpuia (Leader)
25.		Laldinsanga
26.		Lalmuanawma Chhakchhuak
27.		LS Lalramchhuana
28.		Lalramengmawii
29.		K Lalbiakchami
30.		Simran Thapa

The following table contains an overall conspectus of activities of the Study Tour put in chronological order:

DATE	TIME	ACTIVITIES
25/05/2022	07:05 AM	The Study Tour was flagged off by Prof. Rualkhuma Colney, Principal of Govt. Mizoram Law College. Preceded by words of well wishes for the safety of the journey delivered by the Principal, a rented bus-carrying the Study Tour attendees along with one private Light Motor Vehicle left the gathering point for departure i.e., the frontage of Vanapa Hall, Aizawl.
	09:50 AM	Breakfast was consumed at the village of Sialsuk, Aizawl.
	06:20 PM	The destination for accomodation- Tourist Lodge, Khawbung: Champhai, Mizoram was reached.
	08: 00 PM	Tour attendees had dinner at the said lodge.
	09: 00 PM	A briefing session, convened by the Tour Leader Mr. T Lalnunsiana was conducted for the following day.
26/05/2022	06: 00 AM	<p>Tour attendees visited Mizo Poets' Square which is conveniently located adjacent to the said Tourist Lodge.</p> <p>Mizo Poets' Square, a supposed translation from the term <i>Hlakungpui Mual</i> in Mizo language, is a memorial site established in 1986 by an NGO- Khawbung Branch Young Mizo Association to commemorate prominent and distinguished Mizo poets and writers. At the outset, memorials for two poets of Khawbung village origin- Patea and Damhauhva were erected. However, any Mizo poet, as well as writer, was initially commemorated based on established norms and criteria effectuated by a Selection Committee, a sub-committee formed by the Mizo Hla Kungpui Mual Committee. The latter was formed by the Khawbung Branch Young Mizo Association in 1985.</p>

		<p>One of the Aims and Objectives of the Mizo Hla Kungpui Mual Committee is to commemorate any Mizo who has been immensely contributing to the advancement of Mizo literature throughout his/her lifetime.</p> <p>In order to be inducted into Hlakungpui Mual, which has been reviewed after every 10 years, the following criteria come into operation:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i) He/she must be a Mizo ii) His/her death must have been at least 5 years before the proposal in the Selection Committee iii) At least 2-3 of his/her work should have been critically acclaimed and serve undying immense value to the Mizo community. <p>It is to be noted that the usage of the word “poets’ square” is not a correct translation from the original Mizo name <i>Hlakungpui Mual</i> as this memorial site commemorates not only poets but writers as well. This is also evident in the Aims and Objectives of the Mizo Hla Kungpui Mual Committee as well.</p> <p>At present, other than the first two poets, 19 poets and 15 writers have been inducted and commemorated in Hlakungpui Mual.</p>
	07:30 AM	Tour attendees left the scene of Hlakungpui Mual for Vaphai village to study Fiara Tui, Vaphai.
	9:15 AM	<p>Tour attendees reached Fiara Tui, Vaphai</p> <p>The said Fiara Tui is basically a spring water emanating from the cracks of rocks. It has been said that the spring originated from the Tan Tlang Mountain.</p> <p>Fiara Tui is associated with a popular legend of the region, according to which there was an orphan named Fiara living in Lamsial village (the village no longer exists today). Apparently, the boy had a shy nature and never went out to fetch water from the common village spring except for nighttime and early</p>

		<p>dawn, when nobody was around. It was on a particular day that the boy discovered a small spring trickling out from under a rock. The water of the spring was found to be cool, clear and sweet in taste.</p> <p>Fiara Tui holds a special place amongst the Mizos as the sweetness, and the purity of its water has been mentioned in many of their writings and folklore.</p>
	10:20 AM	Breakfast was consumed at Vaphai village.
	12:00 PM	<p>Kungawrhi Puk was visited. The said location is basically a gaping hole but termed as a 'cave'. It is located on the hills between Farkawn and Vaphai villages in the Champhai district.</p> <p>Legend has it that a long time ago, the spirits had abducted and used this cave as a route to confine a beautiful girl by the name of Kungawrhi, who was born from the thumb of a Bawlte King. Kungawrhi was engaged to a brave young man called Pawthira. The incident took place on the night when Pawthira, accompanied by his brother Hrangchala and Kungawrhi were on their way from Pawthira's village and turned in for the night to rest. The spirits called 'Khuavangho' were fascinated by Kungawrhi's magnificent beauty and they kidnapped her, taking her away through the said cave to a supposed underworld. The victimised girl stayed in the cave until the valiant Pawthira returned for his love and fought bravely against the spirits and rescued his beloved from her entrapment. The caves were then named after this girl.</p>
	1:10 PM	<p>Lamsial Puk, located in Farkawn village was visited.</p> <p>This is also a cave of 9 metre length situated in Champhai District, 6.5 kms north of Farkawn Village. In this cave, well preserved human bones have been found earlier, and are now exhibited in a glass container. A precise explanation of the identities of</p>

		these bones, as well as why these bones ended up in the cave is still a mystery to date.
	1:50 PM	<p>Fiara Tui, Farkawn was visited.</p> <p>The legend of the origin of this spring came out precedent to the one in Vaphai Village. Hence, the actual location of whether the correct Fiara Tui is situated in Farkawn or Vaphai Village is disputed by the two villages as well as the Mizo community.</p> <p>However, this location has been declared a 'State Protection Site' by the Government of Mizoram under the Mizoram Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Sites & Remains Act, 2021. On the other hand, the Fiara Tui at Vaphai is not officially recognised.</p>
	2:40 PM	<p>Thasiama Seno Neihna was visited.</p> <p>This is a plateau on a steep rugged hillock that protrudes out precariously and is not easily negotiable by man. It is located at Vaphai, a village about 86 kms. According to legend, the plateau is the site where Thasiama`s Mithun gave birth to a calf. It is considered impossible for a Mithun to climb even today. However, legend tells us that Thasiama had an affair with a beautiful <i>Lasi</i> (fairy) named Chawngtinleri and that the fairy had bestowed him a gift that his Mithun would multiply and make him prosperous. The fairy used to guide Thasiama`s Mithun to this particular hill for safe delivery and guard it against the onslaught of tigers that haunt the area.</p>
	05:20 PM	<p>Zopui Phul Samthang Nature Park of Samthang Village, Champhai was visited.</p> <p>It was converted into a Nature Park, constructed with a North Eastern Council fund of Rs 359.21 Lakhs, and officially opened on 25th February 2022.</p>
	06:00 PM	The destination for accommodation- Tourist Lodge, Khawbung: Champhai, Mizoram was reached safely and dinner was consumed at 08:00 PM

	09:00 PM	A briefing session, convened by the Tour Leader Mr. T Lalnunsiamia was conducted for the following day. Group reports were also heard from all four groups.
27/05/2022	06:45 AM	Tour attendees left accommodation for Zawlsei.
	07:20 AM	<p>Tour attendees were met with Zawlsei Village Level Committee on Myanmar Refugees at Village Council House, Zawlsei, and an interactive session was exchanged.</p> <p>Govt. Mizoram Law College gifted to the Myanmar Refugees 5 quintals of rice through the aforesaid committee.</p> <p>A memorial stone of Selesih Sangsarih (Town of Seven Thousand Households), now located in Zawlsei Village- a site claimed to be the 'first largest Mizo village' and said to have flourished during the first half of the 18th Century AD, was visited. This site is currently protected by the Department of Art & Culture, Govt. of Mizoram.</p> <p>Tea was served to tour attendees by the said committee, followed by the visitation of the Myanmar Refugees Camp of Zawlsei Village.</p>
	9:30 AM	A legal awareness & legal outreach program was successfully conducted at Govt. Khawbung High School, Khawbung Village.
	11: 28 AM	Tour attendees left the lodge for Vangchhia.
	02:16 PM	<p>Zofate Thlangtlak Gate, Vangchhia Mizoram was visited. The said site consist of Kawtchhuah Ropui and Ralven buk.</p> <p>Kawtchhuah Ropui (literally meaning the great entranceway) is Mizoram's first site under the protected monuments of Archaeological Survey of India (ASI).The area is part of the Lower Himalayas and has rows of steep hills largely made up of various kinds of sandstone shading from light grey to blackish.</p>

		<p>The site, measuring about 45 sq km, has yielded pictographs etched on large stone slabs, menhirs (large standing stones), a necropolis (a large cemetery), a water pavilion among other artefacts.</p> <p>The ancient people of Vangchhia also carved terraces on rocks for their settlement — the main excavated site consists of 15 such terraces. There are over 100 menhirs, rising almost 15 feet tall, standing at the excavation site depicting flowers, animals and humans. Water pavilion has strategically drilled holes — between one foot and one metre across — spread over several sandstone slopes and used for storing water. ASI has not been able to accurately date the Vangchhia settlement. Initially, ASI estimated the site to be from the 15th century.</p> <p>However, recently, the ASI team has also discovered neolithic caves near Vangchhia, indicating that the lost civilization could be much older.</p>
	04:00 PM	<p>Lianchhiari Lunglen Tlang and Thangchhuah Mual both located at Dungtlang, Champhai.</p> <p>Lianchhiari Lunglen Tlang is a legendary cliff with its projection protruding perilously far outside the rugged mountain where Lianchhiari used to look-out for her lover Chawngfianga. This is 64 kms South of Champhai on the way to Khawbung.</p> <p>Thangchhuah Mual is basically a memorial site for commemorating prominent Mizo individuals in certain fields.</p>
	09:30 PM	<p>After reaching the place of accommodation at the lodge and the consummation of dinner, a devotion, and review of the Study Tour was conducted. Also, group reports and sharing were also heard and conducted.</p> <p>Best Group award was given to Group No 3.</p>

28/05/2022	06:30 AM	Departure from Tourist Lodge towards Aizawl.
	10:30 AM	Breakfast at East Lungdar
	07:49 PM	The outskirts of Aizawl City were successfully reached wherein the transportation crew members bid farewell to the Tour attendees with prayer.
	08:15 PM	All tour attendees were successfully dropped at their place of abode.

(b) REFUGEE CAMP VISIT: COMPREHENSIVE REPORT

The following information is based on an interview conducted by the writers of this report and also based on observations throughout the visitation of the said camp. The interviewee is Mr. B Laltlankima, a Member of Zawlsei Village Level Committee on Myanmar Refugees who is also the Treasurer of Zawlsei Branch Young Mizo Association.

Construction

By the year 2021, from the month of April, the present relief camp was constructed as the village started to receive an influx of refugees from Myanmar. Approximately Rs 3 lakhs have been disbursed to construct the said camp. The work would consist of 2 days of bulldozer work, and voluntary manual labour consisting of 40 - 70 manpower for a month.

Accommodation Status

At the outset 150-160 no. of refugees ie., approximately 36 families have resided in the said camp. Thereafter, some refugees have left the site due to the convenience of travelling, and for the sake of the convenience of seeing their families. Now, 19 families composed of 90 individuals currently reside in the said camp.

Administration

The Champhai District Commissioner had formed a Village Level Committee on Myanmar Refugees in all those concerned villages affected by the mass refugee crisis. Hence, the said committee had been functioning proactively in Zawlsei ever since. Even before the formation of such a committee, Khawbung Group YMA had taken the initiative of accommodating the refugees who would migrate for safety.

With regards to administration, the said committee can be said to be the officially recognized authority for dealing with the affairs of the refugees. The said committee had created an identification card but their Myanmar IDs were seized for safekeeping. The said IDs are used for certain affairs. The refugees are also barred to go to certain places without reporting to the committee. All gifts received from outsiders are systematically distributed 2 times a month.

Fulfilment of basic amenities

Before the involvement of the government, Khawbung Group YMA would distribute basic amenities to its group members, including Zawlseï, wherein such necessities would then be disbursed to the refugees residing in their own jurisdiction. Zawlseï authorities have also been allowing the refugees to acquire water and wood for fire fuel in their village forests. Other than that, numerous NGOs and private individuals would supply such foods and basic needs to the aforementioned as well. Among the most prominent providers is- Zoram Entu Pawl, a charitable nonprofit organisation formed by the Catholic Church have been regularly giving food supplies such as oil, rice, etc., to Myanmar refugees of Zawlseï.

Other than that, the government has been approached by Zawlseï authorities to supply water reservoirs where the former have been fulfilling such. Also, the District Commissioner, Champhai has in the past supplied food and daily necessities as well.

Problems and Future Prospects

1. It is the request of the Committee that all gifts directed towards the refugees be forwarded first to the Committee as not doing so and sending such gifts directly to the refugees without the knowledge of the concerned authority have been creating issues and problems.
2. The accommodations, since being constructed in a rush and merely made out of fragile materials, require strengthening for permanent settlement. It is to be noted that some families have voluntary intentions to reside in Zawlseï permanently. Even 4 families now have farms given by the authorities.

With regards to the future prospect of the refugees, the authorities have disclosed that they are open to providing permanent settlements and facilities to the refugees.

GALLERY



Fig 1: Mizo Hlakungpui Mual



Fig 2: Fiara Tui, Vaphai



Fig 3: Kungawrhi Puk



Fig 4: Lamsial Puk



Fig 5: Fiara Tui, Farkawn



Fig 6: Thasiama Seno Neihna



Fig 7: Samthang Nature Park



Fig 8: Zawlsei



Fig 9: Refugee Camp, Zawlsei



Fig 10: Zofate Thlangtlak Gate, Vangchhia Mizoram



Fig 11: Kawtchhuah Ropui



Fig 12: Dunglelang



Fig 13: Lianchhiari Lunglen Tlang



Fig 14: Briefing, Devotion, Group Sharing



Fig 15: Best Group