RESEARCH ARTICLE

A CONTENT ANALYSIS OF MIZORAM GOVERNMENT'S USE OF SOCIAL MEDIA AND CITIZEN ENGAGEMENT

¹*Amy Felicia Danielle and ²Prof. Irene Lalruatkimi

¹Research Scholar, Dept. of Mass Communication, Mizoram University, India
²Supervisor, Dept. of Mass Communication, Mizoram University, India

ABSTRACT

Digital platforms have emerged as powerful tools for governance. Mizoram, situated in the Northeastern region of India bordering Myanmar and Bangladesh comprise of strong oral traditions and community-based political practices, this transition marks a significant paradigm shift in how political discourse is constructed, framed and disseminated. This study explores the evolving nature of political communication through a focused content analysis of social media handles managed by the state government. The research investigates how state agencies, particularly the Information, Public Relations, Printing and Stationery Department and the Chief Minister's official social media accounts, employ social media platforms to shape public opinion, promote policy narratives and engage citizens. Using qualitative content analysis approach, the study categorises based on tone, message type, visual symbolism and thematic framing across key governance areas such as development, identity politics, crisis response and cultural representation. Grounded in the theories of Habermas's public sphere theory and platformisation theory, the study critically examines how digital communication alters traditional participatory structures. The shift from grassroots oral discourse to centralized, curated messaging that often blends bureaucratic efficiency with cultural symbolism tailored to resonate with Mizo identity. While this has improved accessibility and visibility of political content, the study also uncovers gaps particularly in inclusivity, digital literacy and the marginalization of rural voices in the digital public sphere. Citizen's response patterns reflected to comments, shares and discourse tone on social media reveal evolving expectations around transparency, accountability and representation. The study recommends a culturally contextualized and inclusive digital strategy for political communication in Mizoram. By aligning technological advancement with local traditions, linguistic diversity and community norms with government agencies can be more effectively engage with the public to foster trust and strengthen democratic participation. The study contributes to the broader understanding of how regional governments in culturally complex societies can adapt digital tools for democratic renewal without compromising traditional values.

INTRODUCTION

In the digital age, political communication has transcended traditional media boundaries evolving into a dynamic interplay of narratives, visuals and user interaction on online platforms. This transformation is particularly notable in regions with deeply rooted oral traditions and community-based political practices, where the adoption of digital tools signifies not just technological adaptation but a fundamental shift in how political discourse is constructed and disseminated. Mizoram, a culturally rich state in the North-Eastern region of India bordering Myanmar and Bangladesh, exemplifies this transition. Traditionally characterized by strong communal engagement and oral deliberation, Mizoram's political culture is now undergoing profound change driven by the integration of digital governance and state-managed social media communication. Digital platforms have become instrumental in reshaping state-citizen relationships acrossIndia, with social media emerging as a central tool for political engagement, policy promotion and governance outreach. While these developments align with national and international trends, their implications in Mizoram require context-specific analysis. Unlike metropolitan centres where digital communication is often characterised by aggressive political branding strategies; Mizoram's approach blends bureaucratic communication strategies with cultural symbolism aimed at reinforcing local identity. Social media accounts such as Department of Information and Public Relations (DIPR) and the Chief Minister's Office (CMO) of Mizoram have become key instruments through which political narratives are curated, framed and transmitted to the public. However, this top-down digital communication model also introduces conceptual challenges. The transition from traditional to centralized, curated messaging raises critical questions about inclusivity, especially in a state where digital literacy varies widely across urban and rural population. While

digital tools have undeniably improved access to political content and facilitated more direct communication channels between the state and citizens, they also risk marginalizing voices that are not digitally visible. The study situates government information systems as both enablers and potential disruptors – fostering enhanced engagement while simultaneously reshaping traditional community-driven political discourse.

Thus, this paper is guided by three objectives:

- To examine how the Mizoram government utilize social media to frame political messages and engage in public discourse.
- To analyse the themes, tones and visual elements used in these online posts.
- To explore how citizens respond to the messages (likes, comments, reactions)

LITERATURE REVIEW

Over the years, social media is considered to have affected public communication and conversation in society, seeing its utilization more and more in political context. Political institutions have started using Facebook pages or groups to engage in direct conversations with citizens and promote more political discourse. According to studies, Twitter, now called X is the perfect platform for users to publicly share political opinions as well as general information through their networks(Stieglitz & Dang-Xuan, 2013). However, in a regional state like Mizoram, X is not a popular social tool used by the Mizo population unlike the Westerners. The increasing significance of social media communication suggests a fundamental shift from traditional oral or public communication, which is often initiated by certain actors(Gibson, 2008) in the study of this context, it can be organizations, political parties, politicians and others.Studies have pointed out that politicians in contemporary democracies all over the world have quickly embraced digital communication as a means of interacting with citizens, having direct conversations and facilitating lively political debates(Hong & Nadler, 2011). US politicians are cited as playing key role in this practice, with Barack Obama's successful use of social media during his term in election campaign serving as the most notable example(Wattal et al., 2010). Therefore, Jurgen Habermas's Public Sphere Theory provides a foundational lens to understand how democratic discourse functions in society. In digital contexts, social media platforms like Facebook, Instagram, X and others serve as new age public spheres allowing government and citizens to interact directly. However, these spaces are shaped by structural constraints and power dynamics that influence who participates and how.

Various research have indicated that from the standpoint of governmental organizations and political institutions, it is necessary to continuously collect, track, evaluate, compile and visualize information from online digital platforms that is politically significant in order to enhance contact with voters and citizens(Zeng et al. 2010; Kavanaugh et al. 2011; Paris and Wan 2011; Stieglitz et al. 2012). (Jungherr et al., 2020) in his book contended that digital media have "retooled" politics rather than completely changing it. In this view, political actors primary requirements such as obtaining and producing political information or cooperating with others have not changed. Digital media influence how political actors and organizations respond to demands particularly by promoting information exchange and links between networks. Although all people are political, not all are always involved in politics. Peoples access, contributions and recognitions could not be equal despite their participation. But in recent years, the situation has evolved. In Bangladesh, digital media is a relatively new phenomena that has been influencing politics and political communication, affecting both the public and lawmakers. There are political languages and criticisms in online discussions and debates. Cyberspace's distinct characteristics make it appear more democratic and practical for political discourse (Md. Sayeed, 2020). In the last ten years, India have used a variety of social media and mobile platforms for political, social and economic communication.

AAP leader Arvind Kejriwal and his party were active on social media platforms like YouTube and Twitter in 2012-13. They later established government in Delhi. But Prime Minister Narendra Modi and his Bhartiya Janata Party (BJP) were the ones who made the most use of social media to interact with middle-class, educated and connected with the Indian citizens as a whole(Rodrigues, 2020). People are taking advantage of the low-cost benefit that social media platforms offer as it provides a safe space for public political discourse to move freely. A study on 'Use of Social Media among Political Leaders in Mizoram' indicates that political leaders from the Northeastern region of Mizoram primarily use Facebook and WhasApp to meet their cognitive needs, these applications are also being used to obtain political and other information. Unlike western practice of using Twitter, Facebook and WhatsApp are popularly used as a venue to share their personal opinions on politics, popularize official business, political campaigns and posting locations (Lalmuankimi et al., 2022). The study shows that there is a high usage of social media among Mizo youths to actively collect and share news, information and gain political knowledge. Depending on some social media posts, it could spark interest on some users in politics or attract some people to join political parties; therefore, it is crucial that content posted on these platforms be trust-worthy. Youths who utilize social media appropriately will form positive political beliefs and perceptions (Lalduhsaka& Lalruatkimi, 2023). These studies highlight that social platforms are not just being used but also monitored by political leaders, associations and organizations in order to view the publics response towards their activities, some result in positive outcome, some in negative and some might have no outcome at all. Therefore, platformization is a fundamental idea in understanding how these social media platforms affect society and culture in general. In recent years, studies on "platformization" have become increasingly prevalent, it examines how digital platforms have become key infrastructures for social, economic and political activity. As governance increasingly transition towards digital utilization and online information communication, the state is subject to the logic of platforms such as algorithmic visibility, monetization of engagement and content moderation policies.

METHODOLOGY

This study uses a qualitative content analysis approach to examine how government agencies in Mizoram shape political discourse through digital platforms. Data is collected from Facebook, Instagram and X (Twitter)official accounts of Department of Information and Public Relations (DIPR) and Chief Minister's Office (CMO) Mizoram, using purposive sampling of posts from January to June, 2025. Contents are analysed based on theme, tone, language, visuals and engagement strategies. Public reactions – likes and comments are also reviewed to assess citizen interaction. The analysis follows a structured framework of identifying patterns in political messaging. This approach enables a focused understanding of how government communication strategies are evolving in digital space and how they influence public political discourse in Mizoram through government social media platforms.

Mizo Society, Social Media and the Government: The Mizo society have strong historical ties to oral traditions, this can be said because verbal communication was the main form of communication before this developing society was taught about alphabets and textformation.It was only when the Christian missionaries came to introduce literacy did the society advance to print medium. Even though this part of the land developed intellectually late, it however caught up fast as the generations grew smarter and wiser, and the digital technology did not leave us behind but instead brought the world around us closer. So today, along with the rest of the world even though still small and developing compared to others. The Mizo society, its people, its culture are visible on the social media platform. Anyone with a smart device, from the youngest to the oldest use social media as an extension of their real life primarily for entertainment and information.Likewise, organizations and agencies use this platform to keep up with trends, promote, popularize and

share information accordingly. One ofMizoram's most reliable government news agency the Department of Information & Public Relations (DIPR) of Mizoram established in May 1972, has become a key government communicator since joining social media in 2019 with a strong presence on Facebook, Instagram and X (Twitter). Meanwhile, the Chief Ministers' Office (CMO)Mizoram maintains professionally-managed accounts, with X active since 2014 being the most established and followed. In contrast, its Facebook and Instagram accounts are newer, less active and still building audience momentum.

Table 1. Department of Information & Public Relations (DIPR)

Platform	Username	Creation	Followers	Following
Facebook	DIPR Mizoram	November 2019	31,000 (31K)	2
Instagram	dipr_mizoram	November 2019 (Verified on May 2021)	1,44,627 (144K)	78
X (Twitter)	DIPRMizoram @dipr_mizoram	August 2019	85,700 (85.7K)	55

Table 2. Chief Ministers' Office Mizoram (CMO Mizoram)

Platform	Username	Creation	Followers	Following
Facebook	Cmo Mizoram	August 2024	Nil	Nil
Instagram	cmo.mizoram	August 2024	2004	23
X (Twitter)	CM Office Mizoram @CMOMizoram	August 2014	28,300 (28.3K)	15

Utilization of Social Media Platform

The Department of Information & Public Relations (DIPR) Mizoram: Hasstrategically embraced social media platforms to become the state's digital voice, acting as a critical interface between the government and the public. Each platform – Facebook, Instagram and X (Twitter), serves a distinct communicative function, collectively shaping how the government informs, engages and governs in the digital age. Posts are generally written in English and Mizo languages ensuring linguistic inclusivity although limited in all the three platforms. Facebook functions as one of the primary outreach platform, widely followed by citizens across rural and urban areas. The page includes posts such as – Government announcements, event updates, programme functions, emergency alerts (meteorology, COVID-19, etc.), speeches, press releases linked to the DIPR website and videos mostly shared from Instagram reels.The platform allows for long-form posts with accompanying visuals which make it well-suited for narrative building and framing political discourse.

Instagram presence of DIPR is centered on visual storytelling, targeting younger audience. The page elevates state communication and shows governance in modern, visually appealing form through carefully chosen image posts, infographics and reels. The messages are often light and visually persuasive, promoting a progressive, citizen-first image of the Mizoram government. On Instagram, all the other districts DIPR have their own Instagram account such as dipr_kolasib, dipro_lunglei, dipr_serchhip and so on unlike sharing the same page on Facebook. The most important, relevant and promotional information is shared on the dipr_mizoram by using the tag or collaboration element. On X (Twitter), the department mostly deliver real-time updates, including official statements and press releases linked to the DIPR website, administrative changes and policy notifications. This platform is used to align with national discourse and promote Mizoram's visibility on the Indian policy map. Posts are brief, timely and often linked to press releases. It enables connection with national and international organisations, professional agencies and political figures, making it more strategic and out-warding than community focused.

Chief Ministers' Office (CMO) Mizoram – has started to develop a multi-platform online presence that captures the changing landscape of political leadership in a technologically advanced society. The office has demonstrated a noteworthy strategic consistency in its use of X (Twitter), presenting itself as a political communicator both within and outside of state borders, despite its social media presenceare still developing especially on Facebook and Instagram. X (Twitter) serving as the oldest digital communication platform since 2014, it is the primary outlet for formal, fast-paced political messaging. Posts are concise and mostly in English language in order to cater to national and international news agencies. The tone of the posts are largely diplomatic, respectful and information driven. This consistent presence has given the CMO page a mature digital voice on this platform.

The recently launched Facebook page is rather inactive and rarely post contents. All the posts uploaded are from Instagram reels. There are rarely any likes from the public nor comments. While it is supposed to be an open space for citizen feedback, this is however not the case on Facebook. Instagram appears aimed at youth engagement and visual storytelling. The posts available are constructed to show a more personal leadership reputation while focusing on policy, co-operation, presence and symbolism.

Table 3. DIPR Mizoram: Number of Posts on Jan-Jun 2025

Platform	Month	January	February	March	April	May	June
Facebook		66	40	46	73	100	374
Instagram (post/reels)		11/10	16/30	20/26	36/23	30/23	75/62
X(post/repost)		40/8	29/4	21/2	15/1	17/3	27/Nil

Interpretation: DIPR Mizoram's Facebook page had the highest posting frequency with content contributions from Information Officers across districts, peaking in June with 374 post and its lowest upload was recorded in February with 40 posts. Daily uploads ranged from 6 to 30, with frequent post repetitions for awareness. Instagram also peaked in June with 75 posts and 62 reels, the lowest being January with 11 post and 10 reels. Compared to Facebook and Instagram, X was most active in January with 40 posts and 8 repost, the least was in April with 15 posts and 1 repost. June had a record of 27 posts and no repost from any channel/user.

Posting trend analysis in January for X:

- Contents or information in Mizo are reposted in English
- Brief contents from the DIPR website are posted with link
- Posting trend analysis in June for Facebook and Instagram:
- The monsoon season brought several high alerts regarding heavy rainfall and notices on suspension of schools.
- Observing of Day: World Environment Day, Green Mizoram Day, Young Mizo Association (YMA) Day, International Yoga Day, International Day Against Drugs Abuse and Illicit Trafficking. All these days had its special programme attended by Ministers and Government Officials, speeches and initiatives took important part in making the uploaded post important on social media.

Repetition of post for awareness

Table 4. CMO Mizoram: Number of Posts on Jan-Jun 2025

Platform	Month	January	February	March	April	May	June
Facebook		1 reel	2 reels	5 reels	1 reel	3 reels	3 reels
Instagram (post/reels)		7/1	4/4	9/5	9/2	17/7	31/9
X (post/repost)		5/1	19/16	15/2	23/7	45/13	42/5

Interpretation: CMO Mizoram Facebook page is minimally active, primarily sharing Instagram reels with March recording the highest upload of 5 reels. On Instagram, June was most active with 31 post and 9 reels many of which were tagged by DIPR pages of various districts, ministers and organisations indicating coordinated visibility. The X account remains the most active and strategic, with May leading at 45 posts and 13 repost. Content is mostly in English

maintaining broader national/international engagement and alignment with political trends and audiences.

Table 5. Themes commonly found on DIPR & CMO Mizoram

Month	Themes
January	Schemes, Social Services, Republic Day, VC Elections, Awareness, Minister programmes, Meetings, Celebrations, Inaugurations
February	VC Elections, Minister programmes, Meetings, Transport, Awareness, Workshop
March	Chapchar Kut, Budget, Meetings, Minister programmes, Awareness and Campaigns, Festivals, Schemes, Workshops, Hnatlangpui, Sports, Promotions
April	Minister programmes, Meetings, Inaugurations, Transportation, Rations, Sports, Marathon, HSLC Result, Workshop, Projects
May	Minister programmes, Meetings, HSSLC Result, Mock Drill, Inaugurations, Meteorological Alert, Disasters, Workshops, Awareness and Campaigns, Entrepreneurship, Promotions, Sports
June	Meteorological Alert, Workshops, Ministers visit and programmes, Meetings, Water Conservation, Celebrations, Inaugurations, World Environment Day, Projects, Promotions, Awareness and Campaigns, Health, Green Mizoram Day, Schemes, YMA Day, Yoga Day, International Day Against Drugs Abuse and Illicit Trafficking

Tones commonly used on DIPR & CMO Mizoram: Being both a professional page, the messages are all framed in formal tones, nothing aggressive, inappropriate and informal. Depending on the theme, the tone also differs. However,from analysis the tone for each month slightly differs in just one or two but in general had a lot in common, which are:

- Informative
- Educational
- Festive
- Inspirational
- Solidarity
- Urgent
- Promotional
- Celebratory/Congratulatory
- Admiration

Table 6. Visual Elements on DIPR & CMO Mizoram

Visual	Elements
Photographs	Posts are made depending on the programme/ occasion
Infographics	Statistics, Names, Themes, Dates, Locations, Numbers, Categories, Graphics
Press Release/ Order/Notice/Circular	Narrative, Official
Posters	Colourful, Animated graphics, Logo, Theme based, Title, Photographs, Organization, Short message/description
Reels	Short video clips, Photographs, Captions, Poster, Music, Narration, Voice over, Theme based

Citizen Feedback on DIPR Mizoram account on Facebook, Instagram and X: Citizen feedback was analysed from post that had the highest engagement on all three platforms, 2nd June post stood out the most providing a diverse range of public responses, making it a valuable source for assessing platform-specific engagement patterns.Another post from Facebook i.e 4th June is also included for relevance, however the same was not shared on Instagram and X platform.

Facebook (FB)

Post and Comments, 2nd June, 2025 (FB figure.1). FB figure.1 shows a government notice announcing the suspension of school attendance due to heavy rain and landslide risks generating significant public
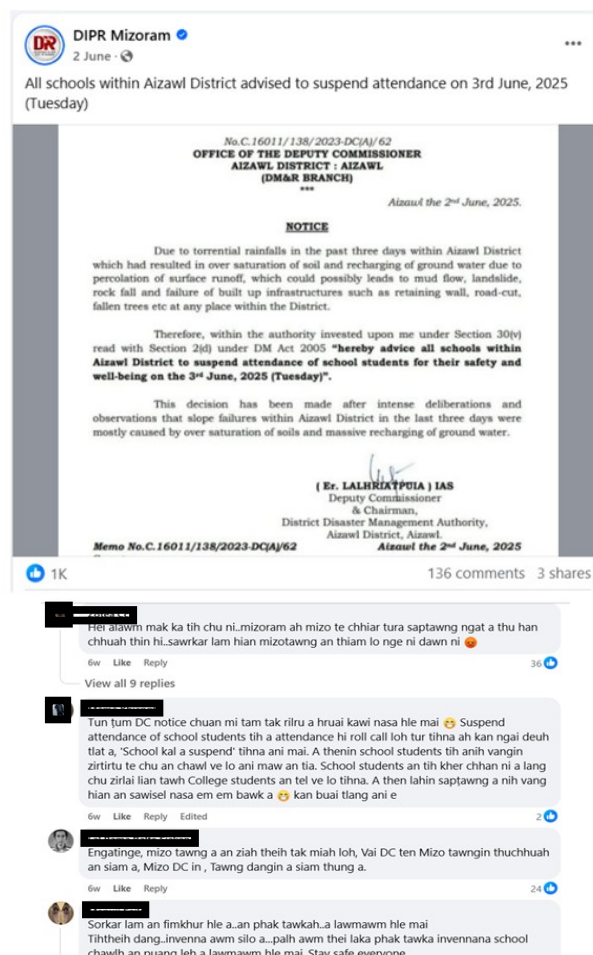
Post and Comments, 2nd June, 2025 (FB figure.1)

engagement with over 136 comments and 1000+ likes. The tone of feedback received was predominantly negative and critical despite the practical intent of the notice. Facebook users strongly questioned why the notice was issued only in English especially given the Deputy Commissioner's Mizo identity. Comparisons were made with non-Mizo officials in other districts who provided bilingual notices. The phrase "suspend attendance of school" caused misinterpretations – some believed students must attend school but without roll calls, others assumed only students were excused but not teachers. A minority expressed support and gratitude for prioritizing student safety. Therefore, official communications should use clear, culturally sensitive language ideally both in English and Mizo. Message framing must also have clarity and inclusivity to avoid misinterpretation during critical times.

Post and comments, 4ᵗʰ June, 2025(FB figure.2)

In FB figure.2, public responses to the Chief Minister's announcement of Aizawl Peace City were mixed and polarized. Some citizens perceived the project as a political strategy or a waste of funds. Others expressed skepticism, calling it a vision without realistic execution. A portion of commenters saw it as a progressive and innovative urban plan, hopeful about future transformation. The initiative sparked a diverse public discourse reflecting both optimism and distrust. The long-term reception will depend on how plans translate into visible outcomes.
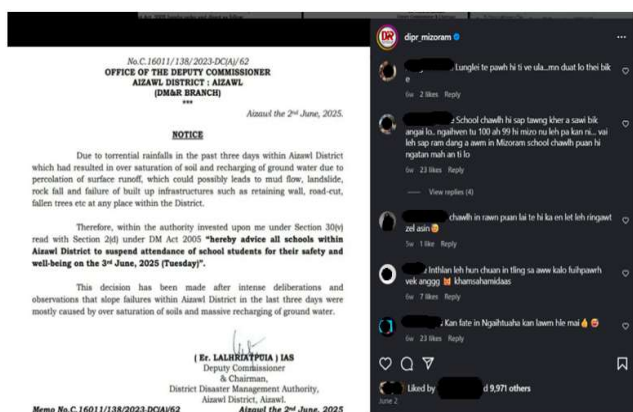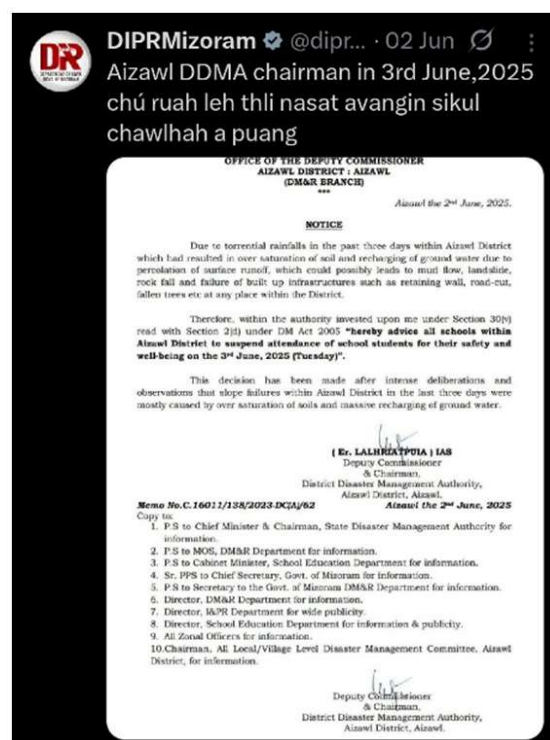
Instagram (IG)

Figure 1. Post and Comments, 2ⁿᵈ June, 2025 (IG figure.1)

IG Figure.1 shows the same school suspension notice, it received the highest engagement both on Facebook and Instagram, with Instagram outperforming in reach – 9,972 likes and 1,090 comments. Comments here were largely positive compared to Facebook especially among younger, English-speaking users who appreciated the update. A few language-related criticism echoed but were outweighed by supportive responses. Platform differences reflect demographic and linguistic divide, influencing public reception and tone of feedback. X. Despite a smaller user base registered its highest engagement on 2ⁿᵈ June with 108 likes and 9 comments (X figure.1). Nature of the feedback saw a mixed reaction – 2 comments criticised the lack of Mizo translation, 2 other comments expressed sympathy for disaster victims and family, others raised questions or confusion about the notice's clarity and applicability. Other posts on the platform saw minimal engagement (10-30 likes, rarely any comments), underscoring this post's exceptional impact. Even on a typically low-activity platform especially for Mizo social media users, crisis-related content can evoke diverse public responses when it directly affects people's lives. Clarity and inclusivity remain key importance regarding information dissemination from government officials.

Post and Comments, 2ⁿᵈ June, 2025 (X figure.1)

Citizen Feedback on CMO Mizoram account on Facebook, Instagram and X: Citizen feedback on CMO Mizoram account were also analysed based on post that had the highest engagement. Facebook account basically being the most inactive did not attract public interaction except for a few 1-5 like reactions. CMO Mizoram Instagram account saw the highest engagement on 5ᵗʰ June, a reel tagged by dipr_serchhip titled "Tlawmngaihna: Humanity in Action." "This is Serchhip District. This is Mizoram. This is tlawmngaihna." – Demonstrating community-led relief work. The post received 9000+ likes and 144 comments with overwhelmingly positive feedback praising compassion and unity. Tagged posts by officials/organisations consistently performed better which likely reached a wider audience. Among the non-tagged post on Instagram, 29ᵗʰ May update on the CM's return from Delhi drew moderate engagement including constructive public concerns on infrastructure, scholarships and budgeting. Most active and widely engaging platform especially among non-Mizo users; peaked engagement on 20ᵗʰ May celebrating Mizoram as India's first fully literate state garnering 78 likes, 24 repost, 10 comments, 9 quotes and 13,000 views. The comment section was highly positive except for one racist remark. The average likes on other post ranged between10-30.
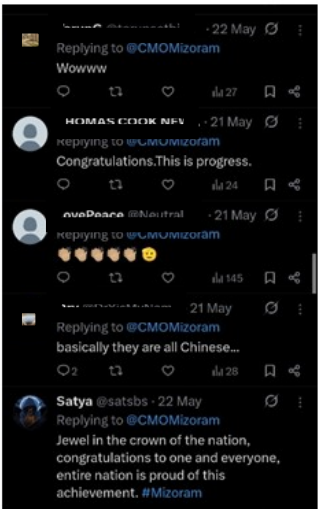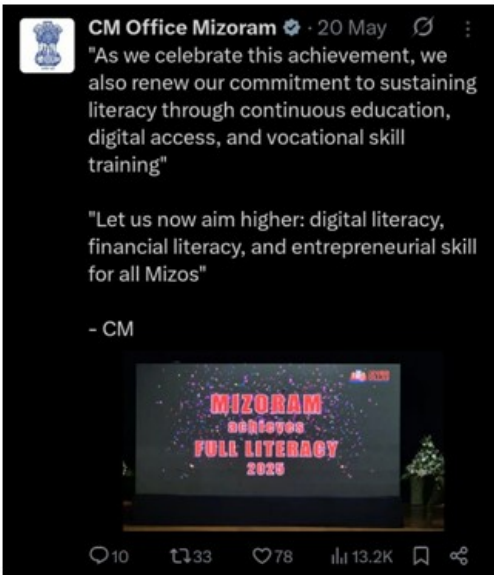
Instagram (IG)

IG tagged post and comment, 5th June, 2025 (IG figure.2)

IG Post and comment, 29th May, 2025 (IG figure.3)

X Post and comments, 20th May, 2025 (X figure.2)

Ethical considerations: The sample for study used were public and official pages, only public and official contents were analysed and no private data were accessed. The identity of the users on each platform remained anonymous following the terms of services of the platforms.

Interpretations were made with contextual sensitivity to avoid misrepresentation.

Limitations: The analysis is limited to only two official and public pages due to time and analysis constraints. Platform activity variation affected representativeness (e.g., CMO Facebook page did not have frequent activity nor enough reach, X platform has few local users). Sample restriction from January-June 2025 may not capture long-term trends.

CONCLUSION

Analysis of the social media pages determines that while DIPR Mizoram's contents aim to inform the public, it also helps maintain a political and professional reputation for politicians and their work. As much as it upholds a positive stance in the manner of framing contents and the political message behind it, the public does not passively watch but engage and share their opinions on what is right and wrong for the good of society. CMO Mizoram on the other hand, is all about image building and making socio-political connections. It should also prioritise making social connections with the public through online interactions and not only through virtual images and messages. Perhaps this would bring a more engaging effect in the long term. The findings also highlight a growing yet varied pattern of engagement where language clarity, cultural resonance and platform specific strategies significantly influence public perception and response. While DIPR leads in visibility and content volume, the CMO's presence especially on X shows promise in broader outreach. Importantly, the study underscores the need for context sensitive, inclusive and transparent communication in a digitally connected Mizo society.

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