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**What is the Department of IT's vision for building a digital-first and citizen-centric governance model in Mizoram, and how is this vision being implemented across various departments?**

The primary objective is to enhance connectivity and digital services in the most isolated and geographically difficult regions, areas previously referred to as “last-mile” villages are now viewed as the “first villages” at the borders of India. Whether situated along the borders of Myanmar or Bangladesh, the aim is to close significant connectivity gaps and promote inclusion.

Telecom connectivity is now deemed essential, not merely for communication or entertainment, but as a basic requirement. The telecom revolution in India, driven by ICT and Digital India initiatives, has facilitated the widespread use of digital payment systems and electronic services. The goal is to provide these advantages directly to remote villages, thereby reducing the necessity for citizens to visit government offices through initiatives such as Common Service Centres (CSCs).

In accordance with the International Year of Cooperatives, there is also a focus on digitizing registrar and cooperative offices and empowering multipurpose cooperative societies to function as local service centers. Despite the geographical challenges in states like Mizoram, the mission remains to guarantee dependable connectivity and inclusive digital access, propelling the next stage of development.

# MIZORAM REIMAGINES “LAST-MILE” AS “FIRST VILLAGE” FOR DIGITAL INCLUSION

*Amit Sharma, IAS, Secretary, ICT & Cooperation Departments, Government of Mizoram, is leading a transformative digital push to connect remote border villages, repositioning them as “first villages” rather than “last-mile” outposts. Under his leadership, Mizoram is advancing e-Office systems, integrating local language AI tools, and expanding fiber connectivity across the state. With a strong focus on cybersecurity, inclusive digital access, and partnerships for AI skilling, Sharma is shaping Mizoram into a resilient, future-ready digital governance model. Some excerpts from a candid conversation with him:*

**Could you highlight key digital initiatives or platforms launched by the department that have improved public service delivery, administrative efficiency, or citizen engagement in Mizoram?**

The state is currently undergoing significant reforms in the ICT sector, shaped by the accumulated experience of its senior leadership. I have previously served as IT Secretary in Jammu & Kashmir, Ladakh, and now I am in a third consecutive state with challenging terrain and border sensitivities. One of the key initiatives being implemented is e-Office, a project that may appear basic on the surface but is transformational for states with logistical and administrative challenges. In Jammu & Kashmir, for instance, the shift to e-Office eliminated the historic practice of biannual physical relocation of secretariat operations, an arduous task involving truckloads of files. Building on that success, the officer spearheaded a similar transition in the current state. With full backing from the Chief Minister and Chief Secretary, the Secretariat has now been almost fully digitized and operates as a paperless office.

The next phase involves extending e-Office



to all Heads of Departments and District Collector offices, with a goal of reaching the grassroots block level. Recognizing the foundational stage of IT adoption in the state, the focus remains on strengthening the basics, including connectivity and digital service delivery.

The state is also looking ahead. A proposal has been submitted to the Ministry of Electronics and IT (MeitY) for the second phase of support. Additionally, an MoU is being prepared with MeitY's Bhashini division to integrate the Mizo language into national AI and language tools, marking a step toward inclusive digital governance. These gradual but strategic moves aim to position the state as a future-ready digital entity.

**How is the department leveraging emerging technologies such as cloud computing, AI, IoT, and data analytics to modernize governance and support evidence-based policymaking in the state?**

Mizoram finds itself at a crucial

inflection point in its digital journey, not at the initial stage of tech adoption, nor at the saturation level seen in more mature IT ecosystems like Karnataka or Telangana. The state is strategically positioned to harness cutting-edge technologies, including AI, and is actively working to integrate AI-driven solutions into governance.

One such initiative is a collaboration with MeitY's Bhashini platform to integrate local languages into large language models, ensuring AI applications are inclusive and accessible. Additionally, following a recent meeting with Microsoft's global leadership, plans are underway to launch AI certification programs for students and government employees under CSR initiatives, offered free of cost. These programs will build AI readiness at the grassroots level.

Mizoram has also built robust institutional capacity to support its digital ambitions, including a dedicated Directorate of ICT, the Mizoram State e-Governance Agency,

and entities like ZENICS. A major infrastructure initiative, the Mizoram Fiber Grid Network, is nearing launch and will extend connectivity to the block and village levels.

With digital expansion comes the critical responsibility of securing data and ensuring ethical tech use. The state is proactively exploring cybersecurity frameworks by engaging with industry leaders. During a recent Digital Transformation Conclave, attended by senior officials from MeitY, DARPG, and MEA, various cybersecurity solutions were evaluated for local relevance.

Recent incidents, including an attempted breach of the Mizoram Public Service Commission website, have reinforced the urgency of these measures. The incident, reported to CERT-In and resolved swiftly, served as a wake-up call. Given the state's international borders with Myanmar and Bangladesh, the risk of cyber threats from foreign IPs adds another layer of complexity. To mitigate this, Mizoram is strengthening its

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**MIZORAM IS NOT ONLY EXPANDING DIGITAL ACCESS BUT IS ALSO EMBEDDING RESILIENCE, RESPONSIBILITY, AND SECURITY INTO ITS DIGITAL GOVERNANCE FRAMEWORK**



State Data Centre and introducing safeguards to protect sensitive government data from potential breaches.

Overall, Mizoram is not only expanding digital access but is also embedding resilience, responsibility, and security into its digital governance framework.

**Looking ahead, what are the department's key priorities and challenges in scaling digital infrastructure, enhancing inter-departmental collaboration, and building a resilient and future-ready digital governance ecosystem?**

A key strategic focus for Mizoram's digital governance is to build a system that is resilient, robust, and future-ready by integrating the latest technologies. Upgradation of existing infrastructure is actively encouraged, alongside the broader mission of ensuring last-mile connectivity and digital inclusion for all citizens. The long-term vision is clear: visiting a government office should eventually become an exception, not a necessity, reserved for informal dialogue over

tea, not for availing basic services. Every essential service should be accessible online, efficiently and transparently.

In parallel, the state is aiming to scale its digital infrastructure to support larger economic ambitions. Drawing from experience with Invest India, leadership within the state has proposed the creation of Global Capability Centres (GCCs), an evolution beyond traditional BPOs. Given Mizoram's strategic location between two international borders, the state is well-positioned to offer end-to-end human resource and digital service solutions to the region.

To support this transformation, ongoing collaborations are underway with institutions like STPI, NIELIT, and Mizoram University, which is hosting major conferences on AI-driven financial inclusion. Cybersecurity awareness is also being ramped up. Over the coming year, these efforts are expected to reshape Mizoram into a dynamic, IT-driven state prepared for the digital future. □