

## Love in the time of landslides

No pastor or priest to make them recite vows, no magistrate to witness the wedding, no papers signed. This couple in Mizoram tied the knot at a ceremony organised by and at a Public Works Department (PWD) office.

In the backdrop of bitumen barrels, spades and other tools, the two lovebirds, Lukhi Ram and Zothanpuii, exchanged vows in a ceremony conducted by a junior engineer, Lalsangliana Sailo, at the PWD Serchhip sub-division office, 135 km from Aizawl.

Lukhi Ram, in his late 30s, is a temporary employee with the PWD while Zothanpuii works as a daily labourer with the same department.

They wanted to tie the knot despite the difference in their faiths - Lukhi Ram is a Hindu while Zothanpuii, a Mizo from Serchhip town, is a Christian.

Due to financial constraints they could not approach a court for a civil marriage. So their bosses and colleagues came together to help them out, Sailo said.

The bridegroom, with his tongue firmly in cheek, vowed: 'I, Lukhi Ram, will love you, cherish you in times of landslides, road blocks and other obstacles that might befall between us, as long as the thick cloud formed by burning bitumen is around, I will take thee as my beloved wife for ever.'

The bride responded in the same tone, saying she would adore him, serve him, love him and remain faithful to him - even when he would go out of station on duty.

Lukhi Ram's co-workers presented a choir on the occasion, singing 'Dil Dil Dil Dewana' for five minutes with spades and empty barrels serving as musical instruments.

'I believe this is the second marriage of its kind. If I'm not mistaken a wedding like this was organised in 1992 by K.L. Berema, who was then the executive engineer of PWD in Mamit district,' Sailo said.

'This marriage has nothing to do with the government, the Church or any other religion. We just made arrangements for the couple from our staff who wanted to exchange the vows,' he said.

A photo session was held under the supervision of N. Chhelai, executive engineer of the Serchhip sub-division, with bitumen barrels, spades and wheelbarrows forming the background.

An official at Serchhip told IANS there was no written document declaring the couple as man and wife. 'The only thing that made them man and wife is their commitment to love each other.'

'They didn't need any official status for the marriage, they needed only mutual trust and love for each other, they possessed that and they got married.'

*Sangzuala Hmar* ( © IANS / India eNews)