

# Thingkho *Le* Malcha

A Daily Newsletter by KSO Media & Documentation Cell



# KUT CHIBAI

**COVER PHOTO (L-R):**

Mr. Kut 1985 Lalsuong Tonsing, Nehrumarg, Lamka  
Pu Jf. Rothangliana, MLA CCpur Assembly Constituency  
(Former President Kuki National Assembly)  
Miss Kut 1985 Rose Lalthangnem, Bungmual, Lamka





## KUKI VICTIMS' UPDATE

As on 01.11.2023



**146**  
DEATHS



**200+**  
VILLAGES BURNT



**7000+**  
HOUSES BURNT



**360**  
CHURCHES &  
SYNAGOGUES BURNT



**41,425**  
DISPLACED  
PERSONS

Thingkho Le Malcha (charred wood tied with chilli): A war symbol; a pre-arranged secret code agreed upon by the Kukis to inform the people about the commencement of war and on receiving this, one has to remain alert and be ready for the battle.



## KSO-GHQ CALLS 48-HRS SHUTDOWN IN KUKI-ZO DOMINATED HILL DISTRICTS IN PROTEST AGAINST DEPLOYMENT OF STATE FORCES IN MOREH

Taking strong exception to the continued stationing and additional deployment of Manipur police commandos in Moreh, the border town of Manipur, in the wee hours of November 1, 2023, the Kuki Students' Organization General Headquarters (KSO-GHQ), the apex student body of the Kukis, has called 48-hours total shutdown in all Kuki-Zo dominated hill districts of Manipur from midnight of November 1.

While the demand for withdrawal of the state forces in the aforesaid town has been gaining momentum following their excesses and total disregard to civil rights and liberties, the move of the State government in forcefully deploying a convoy of 19 vehicles carrying Manipur police commandos and the Arambai Tenggol has added more fuel to the fire in the already volatile situation, KSO-GHQ said in a statement issued on Wednesday.

The KSO said, "The Junta-like trigger-happy police commandos ransacked, looted and burnt down houses and vehicles belonging to Kuki-Zo people at Sinam village stretching along the Indo-Myanmar road in Tengnoupal district of Manipur. In the face of police brute force and excesses upon innocent civilians, hundreds of Sinam villagers fled their homes and hid in the jungle in a bid to save their lives as most of them, including women and children got injuries while running for their lives in the dead of the night."

It is also highly condemnable the manner in which extensive, all-out search and combing operation is being conducted by the state forces in Kuki-Zo inhabited Moreh border area wherein every male person bears the brunt of police brute force as they are beaten black and blue by the police commandos at will, let alone the vandalization and lootings of house properties, it said.

The Kuki student body also stated that the prejudices of chauvinistic N. Biren Singh government has been manifested time and again with the convening of emergency cabinet meeting last night in which a whopping amount of Rs.50,00,000 ex-gratia compensation was sanctioned including granting of a suitable job to the next of kin of the slain Meitei police officer. Contrarily, the Meitei-centric majoritarian government has not delivered a tinge of justice till date to the family of Mr. Onkhomang Haokip, a Kuki-Zo Police Sub-Inspector who was shot dead by the Meiteis while he was in the line of duty, KSO accused.

Alleging impartial justice has been abruptly denied to the minority Kuki-Zo community as there has been no fairness in delivering justice to the victims in the on-going ethnic violence, the KSO said the modus operandi of applying different yardsticks to different communities - the Meiteis and Kuki-Zo, in the sphere of granting compensation too, has emboldened and sheds a clear, undiminished light of their TOTAL SEPARATION on ethnic lines!

The KSO also said, "The present crisis in Manipur could have been averted had the Union Home Minister, Amit Shah fulfilled his promises (during his visit to Churachandpur and Moreh on 30th May, & 1st June, 2023) to withdraw police commandos from Moreh within 3 days, and had the central leadership heeded to the repeated pleas and clarion calls of Kuki Inpi Manipur, Kuki Inpi Tengnoupal and Hill Tribal Council Moreh to withdraw state forces in Moreh in the interest of peace and normalcy in the area."

It argued that the Government of India has the bounden duty to withdraw state forces from Moreh which has been the long-pending collective demand of Kuki-Zo people without any further delay if more bloodshed and violence are to be avoided. Sheer militarization and/or deployment of more and more number of state forces in Moreh will rather escalate the volatile situation.

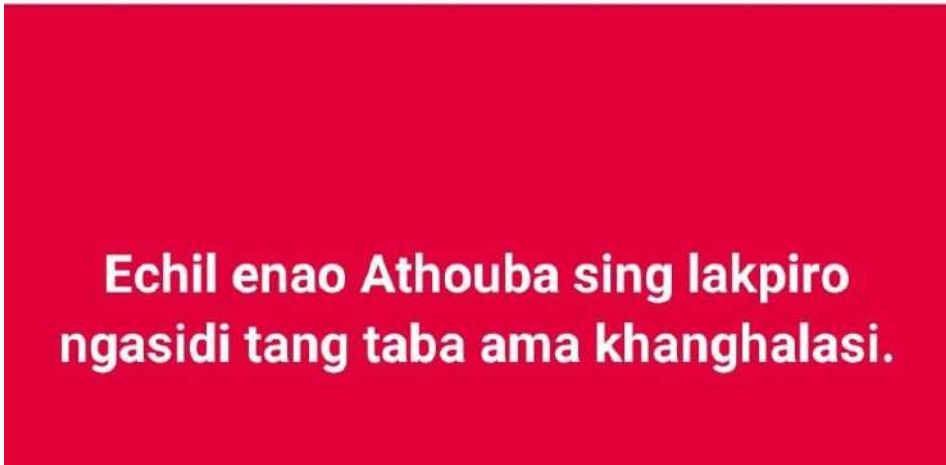
In view of the Meiteis' tyrannical misgovernance at this emergent war-time situation, the Kuki Students' Organisation (GHQ) strongly called on the central leadership right from the Prime Minister's Office to the Ministry of Home Affairs, Government of India, to recall and withdraw all the state forces from Moreh, thereby deploying competent and high-ranking Kuki-Zo police officers to be assisted by the central security forces in maintaining law and order in the border town. The sincerity and seriousness of the central government in ushering peaceful and conducive atmosphere for devising lasting political solution to the Kuki-Zo people shall be revealed and tested in its dealing of the current crisis in Moreh, it added.

The KSO demanded unconditional and immediate withdrawal of all the state forces and every Meitei police, IRB and MR personnel from Moreh. In the event of any untoward incident (s) of violence occurring in the border town, the government shall be held responsible, it warned.

# LOOTING OF GOVERNMENT ARMORIES CONTINUES; CURFEW IMPOSED IN IMPHAL



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Amidst the complete militarization and terrorization of innocent Kukis at the border town of Moreh, the Meitei radical groups and Meitei mobs, in their attempt to vent out their angst towards the Kuki people for retaliatory purpose, reportedly looted government armories at 1st Manipur Rifles, Old Lambulane, Imphal.

Heavy firing between an armed Meitei mob numbering over 3,000 and the Manipur Rifles has been reported in the heart of Imphal city.

As per reports, locals said the mob gathered at the palace compound of Leishemba Sanajaoba, the BJP Rajya Sabha MP and a member of the Manipur royal family, in the afternoon. Several were armed, they claimed.

The incidents occurred on Wednesday around 6:00 PM. A viral video clip of the incident indicated the looting of sophisticated arms and ammunitions. Sounds of several gunshots were heard in the viral video.

It has been learnt from reliable sources that several sophisticated arms and ammunitions from the Police camp was taken away. Some social media users even said that the arms taken away by the Arambai Tenggol and Meitei Leepun were stocked in Palace Compound, Imphal. However, TLM could not independently verify the veracity of the arms looted in 1st MR.

With the situation in Imphal turning uglier, the concerned District Magistrates have imposed Curfew in Imphal East and Imphal West districts.

Co-incidentally, the Commander-in-Chief of Arambai

Tenggol Korounganba Khuman, on his social media handle, summoned all the cadres of Arambai Tenggol for a major action, indicating the pre-planned looting of government armories once again. Earlier in the day, the Meitei titular king, Leishemba Sanajaoba, MP (Rajya Sabha), had also instructed all his devotees to get prepared (Semsaro Echasa- in Manipuri language), indicating their plan to wage an ugly war against the Kuki-Zo community.

Indeed, the continued looting of government armories is a pre-planned event and the two notorious leaders of the Meitei radical groups' social media post is a testament of the fact.



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Meanwhile, the concerned social media platforms administrators or users have issued stricters to all not to post the incidents of looting armouries in all their social media platforms.



## KUKI INPI TENGNOUNPAL: MEITEI POLICE COMMANDOS TORCH KUKI HOUSES, VEHICLES; LOOT HUGE AMOUNT OF CASH

The Kuki Inpi Tegnoupal district has alleged that combined team of Meitei militants and Manipur police commandos had burnt down houses and vehicles and looted money at Sinam village in Manipur's Tegnoupal district.

The Kuki Inpi Tegnoupal district vehemently condemned the burning down of houses and properties and looting villager's hard-earn money including Church money.

T Haokip, Vice President of Kuki Inpi Tegnoupal (External) said that the incident occurred at around 2:30pm of October 31 when the womenfolk blocked the combined team of police commandoes, Arambai Tenggol and Meitei Leepun who were wearing state police commando uniforms.

He also alleged that the Arambai Tenggol, Meitei Leepun masquerading as police commandoes were moving together with state police commando towards Moreh and they opened fire at womenfolk and injured some of them when the women halted them at Sinam village, Tegnoupal district.

He said that the village volunteers who guarded the village

retaliated and the exchange of fire lasted for about one hour.

He continued that following the incident, personnel of Assam Rifles rushed to the spot and intervened and asked the village volunteers to cease fire.

"Taking advantage of the presence of the Assam Rifles, the Meitei police and their cohorts burnt down houses, vehicles and damaged properties. They also looted money from houses including the village Church", asserted T. Haokip.

He also pointed out that the Meitei police burnt down two residential houses to ashes and six vehicles including four numbers of two-wheeler vehicles while seven other vehicles were also damaged.

"The village land papers were also taken away by the Meitei police," he added.

He said that fortunately, one officer of the Assam Rifles intervened and prevented the Meitei terror groups from burning the entire village.

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## CoTU CALLS 48-HOUR TOTAL SHUTDOWN IN KANGPOKPI

The Committee on Tribal Unity, or CoTU Sadar Hills Kangpokpi and the Kuki Students' Organization General Headquarters imposed a 48-hour total shutdown in all Kuki-Zo dominated areas in Manipur.

The CoTU's total shutdown will begin from 6:00 a.m of November 2.

CoTU's Media Cell Coordinator, Ng. Lun Kipgen said that the committee is seriously disturbed to learn that the Meitei insurgents disguised as special commandos, burnt down several houses and vehicles, looted many houses including church offerings at Sinam village along Imphal-Moreh road.

He said that in protest against the anti-national activities of Meitei insurgents in the border town Moreh, the Committee decided to impose a 48-hour total shutdown in Kangpokpi district from early morning of

November 2 from 6:00 am to 6:00 am of November 4.

He continued that the armed Meitei insurgents in Myanmar are a part of the anti-democratic alliance and are seeking refuge in Moreh.

"The attempt to reinforce state forces in Moreh is to provide a safe route for transnational entry of Meitei insurgents", he added.

He also said the committee affirmed that it shall launch various forms of intensified democratic agitation until our demands for complete withdrawal of Meitei insurgents and Meitei forces are met and any untoward incident arising out of this will be the sole responsibility of the head of the state.

Emergency services, Press and COTU units will be exempted from the purview of the total shutdown.

## ITLF CRITICIZES CENTRE GOVERNMENT, CENTRE FORCES FOR ALLOWING MEITEI COMMANDOS TO LOOT, BURN, AND TERRORIZE KUKI-ZO VILLAGES

Lambasting the Government of India's failure in materialising its earlier assurance for withdrawing Manipur state forces from Moreh, the border town, the Indigenous Tribal Leaders' Forum (ITLF) has asked why the Meitei police commandos were now allowed to loot, burn and terrorize the Kuki-Zo villages in presence of Central security forces.

The tribal forum said, "The presence of Meitei police personnel [in Moreh] is leading to tension and heightening the insecurity of tribals."

In a statement issued on Wednesday, ITLF leader, Ginza Vualzong said the process of terrorizing Kuki-Zo tribals by Meitei police commandos in the border town of Moreh has begun, with 12 innocent villagers including a handicapped man arrested from their homes in an operation today.

"Commandos also looted and burnt tribal houses yesterday at Sinam village on the way to Moreh," he said.

Following the killing of Meitei police officer Chingtham Anand Kumar yesterday by unknown assailants, more than 20 vehicles carrying Manipur commandos were sent to the area as reinforcements. On the way, the team burnt down two houses, four two-wheelers, and two four-wheelers at Sinam village. The commandos also looted money amounting to lakhs of rupees and stole the village registration papers, ITLF alleged.

Today morning, a joint operation with the Assam Rifles

was carried out at Phaicham Veng and Gamnom Veng in Moreh. Shockingly, even the chairman of Gamnom Veng was detained because his children had a toy binoculars. The detained persons were released after 12 hours. All those detained were innocent villagers, including Luncha Haokip, a handicap.

Witnesses said the Assam Rifles escorted the commandos to Moreh and gave them a free hand during the operation. To compound the woes of residents, a complete curfew has been imposed in Moreh, with people unable to buy rations.

Yesterday, a team of Manipur commandos also set fire to the Wall of Remembrance structure at Chikim Village in Moreh around 11:00 AM. They also burned and vandalized temporary sheds and dispersed women participating in a sit-in protest.

ITLF claimed that during his visit to the strife-torn Manipur in May, the Home Minister Amit Shah had gave an assurance that all commandos would be removed from Moreh within three days, but nothing was done. "When the Indigenous Tribal Leaders' Forum (ITLF) last met the minister in Delhi, we requested him to remove Meitei police personnel from all hill areas. We were assured that Meitei commandos would not be allowed to do things on their own and would always be accompanied by central forces," it added.

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## MIZORAM: MNF CLARIFIES NDA AFFILIATION, VOICES CONCERNS

Aizawl: The Mizoram National Front (MNF) convened a press conference to shed light on their affiliation with the National Democratic Alliance (NDA) and to raise concerns about the plight of their brethren in Manipur.

MNF's inclusion in NDA is due to alliance against Congress, not alignment with Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), said VL Krosshnehzova, MNF's Media & Publicity Incharge. The MNF remains committed to its distinct identity within the alliance, driven by its mission to protect and advocate for the interests of Mizoram, he added.

During the press conference, the MNF also expressed grave concerns over the alleged suppression of their efforts to address the suffering of the Zo brethren in Manipur.

The MNF accused the Manipur BJP government, along with Manipur Police, Meitei organisations, Arambai Tenggol, and Meetei Lipun, of allegedly orchestrating actions that aimed to annihilate Mizoram's brethren, who have endured the consequences of ethnic clashes.

In this context, Krosshnehzova said, C. Lalrosanga, MNF MP in the Lok Sabha, and K. Vanlalvena, Rajya Sabha MP, had sought to raise awareness about the predicament in Parliament. However, their attempts were reportedly met with silencing and restrictions, both in parliamentary sessions and within NDA meetings. This alleged suppression of their voices led them to discontinue their participation in NDA meetings.

## ANSAM CALLS ECO-BLOCKADE IN ALL NAGA AREAS FROM NOV 3

The All Naga Students' Association Manipur (ANSAM) has declared to launch economic blockade in all the Naga areas of Manipur from 6 pm of November 3 until the Memorandum of Agreement it had signed with the State government is implemented.

A statement issued on Tuesday stated that the decision was taken in the 2nd Legislative Assembly of ANSAM for the tenure 2022-2024, held on October 31 at Tamei headquarter, Tamenglong.

"The august house comprising the constituent units and subordinate bodies of ANSAM had unanimously resolved to resume the suspended agitation from November 3, 2023, and intensify the agitation in the event of failing to materialize the Memorandum of Agreement (MoA) signed between State government and ANSAM on 26 May, 2023," it said.

In the Memorandum of Agreement, the State government had assured ANSAM leaders to restore internet connectivity in the State within five days (in three working days) subject to assessment of law and order conditions. It was also agreed that the results of 190 (145+45 ST Special Drive) posts of Assistant Professors

to be engaged on contract basis for one academic session should be declared on or before November 2.

ANSAM stated that the association was irked by the further extension of blanket internet ban in the State through government order on October 31, which negated the agreed point No.1 of the MoA that has breached the mutual trust amongst the parties.

While taking serious note of the shortage of teachers in government colleges, it said the State government should implement the Agreed point No.2 of the MoA to declare the result of 190 (145+45 ST Special Drive) posts of Assistant Professors on or before November 2 as assured by chief minister of Manipur.

ANSAM requested all its constituent units and subordinate bodies to strictly enforce the proposed economic blockade in their respective jurisdictions to withstand and fight for the rights and for implementation of the agreed points in the memorandum of agreement (MoA) in letter and spirit.

It further appealed to the government officials and public for utmost cooperation and understanding during the course of the agitation.

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## RAJNATH SINGH APPEALS MEITEI, KUKI COMMUNITIES IN MANIPUR TO SIT TOGETHER TO END TRUST DEFICIT BETWEEN THEM

Defence Minister Rajnath Singh on Wednesday made a fervent appeal to the warring Meitei and Kuki communities in Manipur to sit together and have a heart-to-heart conversation to end the trust deficit between the two sides.

In an address at an election rally in this southernmost part of Mizoram bordering Myanmar, Singh said violence is no solution to any problem and the two communities in Manipur must talk to each other to improve the situation in the troubled state.

"The Northeast has been peaceful in the last nine years. However, we have witnessed violence in Manipur and it is painful for us," Singh said.

"Violence is no solution to any problem. What we need is heart-to-heart conversation. I appeal to both the communities

to sit together and end trust deficit," Singh added.

Manipur had been witnessing large-scale violence in the last few months because of hostilities between the Meitei and Kuki communities.

The senior BJP leader said, "I want to categorically say that it (violence) did not take place because of any political party. It happened because of certain situations." The defence minister also accused the Congress of trying to exploit the situation in Manipur for political gain. "When the situation in Manipur was deteriorating, Congress tried its best to do politics over it," he said.

"There is a need to keep the entire country, including Mizoram and Northeast, away from the negative politics of Congress," he added.





**SPECIAL ARTICLE**

# KUT AND ITS SIGNIFICANCE

## What is Kut?

Kut means 'festival' in many dialects of the Kuki tribes. Kuki people have been celebrating many Kuts or festivals since olden days. For instance, Mim Kut is celebrated after the harvest of rabi crop 'mim' (job's ear) in early part of the year. Mim Kut is a state recognised festival for the Kukis in Nagaland. Chapphou Kut is celebrated at the onset of spring when the mowed down vegetations are dried in the sun and readied for burning down for jhumming cultivation in anticipation of the food crops that will be sown soon. Hun Kut or simply Hun is celebrated after seed sowing in summer. Hun day (April 17) is declared recently a restricted holiday by Manipur govt. Lawm Kut is celebrated when the traditional 'lawm' (labour team) completes all the necessary labours of seed sowings and weedings. In later part of the year, i.e., in autumn, Chang Kut is celebrated when farmers finish harvesting their food crops especially paddy (chang) giving thanks to the almighty for giving them the fruits of their year-long labour. In this way, Kuki people have celebrated various Kuts (festivals) in tune with the changing seasons of the year marking specific events. In other words, right from the beginning of the seed sowing till the harvest, the Kuki people who have been traditionally farmers celebrated each stage of the development of the food crops. The present Chavang (autumn) Kut or simply Kut is perhaps derived from Chang Kut to mark the season of paddy harvest.

## Olden Kut

In olden days Kuts were celebrated with varied traditional fervor. Folk dances such as Saguol Kengkhai, Suhta Laam (modern bamboo dance), Phit Laam, Laamkuol, etc. were performed as merry-making.

Traditional sports like Suhtum Kho (a form of javelin throw), Kungkal/Sielkal (high jump/jumping over a standing mithun), Kibuot/Buontuol (wrestling), etc. were showcased to the enthusiastic spectators. In the same way, traditional musical instruments such as Gosem (bagpipe), Theile (flute), Pengkul (trumpet), Pheiphit, Lhemlhei, etc. were played and competitions in these events were organized. The whole celebration of Kuts lasted generally from three days to a week.

## Modern Kut

Fast forward to modern day, the modern Kuts are celebrated the way we see today. The Kut in question may be dated back to 1979 when state level Chavang Kut celebration was first held at Keithelmanbi village in Kangpokpi district. One significant addition to the Chavang Kut celebration is beauty contest which came to be famous as Miss Kut. Years later 'Chavang' was deleted for want of commonality amongst the Kut celebrating tribes. Manipur state government declared Kut a state holiday in 1990. The weeklong celebration become a one day extravaganza and the village level festivity has become a state level celebration. The format may change or the perception towards Kut celebrations may differ now but the fact remains that it is a significant event which stands as proof that Kuki people walk together with time and they can never forget the giver of all harvests. This year, in view of the current situation in Manipur, Kut is not celebrated but observed in village level as day of prayer for peace and paying of homage to the departed martyrs.





*“For the first time in India’s independent history, we the Kukis are unable to celebrate the auspicious Chavang Kut festival. We are denied our Cultural Rights as enshrined in article 29.”*

Kut is a term often used interchangeably with ‘festival’ or ‘harvesting festival,’ and it holds significant cultural importance for the Chin-Kuki-Mizo community. The observance of Kut is rooted in three fundamental principles: it serves as a time for the hardworking agricultural community to take a break from their labor and enjoy recreational activities, as an expression of gratitude to the deity they worship for the bountiful harvest, and as a means of connecting the community with the supernatural forces for collective well-being.

Kut is celebrated by various ethnic groups that were historically referred to as the “Kuki-Chin-Lushai” in colonial times. These groups are scattered across regions that now constitute present-day states like Mizoram, Tripura, Manipur, Assam, Bangladesh, and Burma. They share a common belief that their ancestors emerged from the earth through a capstone known as Chhinlung, Sinlung, or Khul.

The festival is recognized by different names among the various sub-communities within the Chin-Kuki-Mizo group. For example, it is called ‘Pawl Kut’ in Mizoram and is celebrated over two days in December each year. Its primary purpose is to express gratitude to the deities for a successful harvest, and the festivities involve singing, dancing, and merrymaking.

### **How Chavang Kut was traditionally celebrated**

The term ‘Chavang’ translates to ‘autumn’ in the Thadou-Kuki dialect, and Chavang Kut is a post-harvest festival observed by the Thadou-speaking Kuki group. Traditionally, it involves merry making, the singing of folk songs, the consumption of rice beer (Ju), dancing, and traditional sports like greased pole climbing, high jump, long jump, wrestling, and more.

In the past, the Kut festival was primarily important in the religio-cultural sense. The underlying principle behind the observance was to give credits to the gods for the abundant harvest. It was a form of communication by the community to the super-natural elements and was originally inspired by a socio-religious function. Kut was observed differently with no systematic planning, elaborate programmes, expensive budget or scheduled date. It was not in practice to mark out a specific day to commemorate the celebration of the post-harvest festival. The celebration was confined within a village and each village celebrates it differently.

### **Modern day celebration of Kut Festival**

Kut has been formally celebrated since the year 1979 in the state of Manipur. It is celebrated on 1st November of every year with the following items as a crucial part of the program: an invocation prayer, cultural dances, songs, cultural displays, beauty contest, speeches from invited

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dignitaries who are either political leaders, government officials particularly bureaucrats or decorated local persons in different fields of accomplishments.

### **Meanings and Significance of Folk Dances in Kut Festival**

Folk dances are performed during Kut festival. These performances included the Sa-ai Chang-ai dance, Jou-Lei-Kon, Sagol-Kengkhai, Salu Laap Lam, and Aw Thinglhang Gam.

The Sa-ai (Animal-Ritual) and Chang-ai (Paddy-Ritual) dances hold equal importance, with the former performed by men and the latter by women. In the Sa-ai ceremony, it was the duty of men to hunt game and provide ample meat for their families, while women were responsible for procuring abundant grain. The term “Sa” signifies animals, and “ai” is commonly interpreted as “subjugation,” reflecting a ritual of asserting complete dominance over the animals killed. The Sa-Ai ceremony involved a man who had hunted a tiger, an eagle, a wild bear, a squirrel, or a jungle cock/partridge. According to Kailal Lhouvum, if the spirits of the animals killed were not subjugated in a ritual, the hunter’s family could face ill-health or misfortune. The ritual included a dramatized play, during which an egg was placed in the mouth of a deceased tiger, and its head was pierced with a bamboo spike. In this make-believe dialogue between the tiger’s spirit and the Sa-ai performer, the tiger was accused of theft, resulting in its deserved demise.

Similarly, the Chang-ai dance represented a victory over the soul of the paddy, and the ceremony was exclusively conducted by women. It was performed by an individual who had harvested surplus grains over multiple years, far exceeding the household’s requirements. During the ritual, village youths assisted in carrying the rice grains and scattered them from the agricultural field to the performer’s house. This act symbolized the fulfillment of the performer’s duty and served as a thanksgiving gesture to God for the bountiful harvest. Only individuals who had performed this ritual during their lifetime were believed to have an uninterrupted passage to the afterlife, referred to as Mithi-Khuo. The Thadou-Kukis held the belief that a demon named Kulsamnu awaited all spirits of the deceased, tormenting them except those who had performed the Sa-ai or Chang-ai ritual. Both Sa-ai

and Chang-ai had to be conducted three times during a person’s life.

Salulap-laam, the dance that displayed animal skulls, was performed during the Sa-ai and Chang-ai rituals. The heads of all jungle animals killed throughout the year were gathered in the chief’s house, and a feast was declared for the entire village. This dance aimed to convince the spirits of the deceased animals to acknowledge their belonging to the world of the dead and depart from the land of the living. After the dance, the priest would recite incantations, addressing the spirits of the deceased animals and bidding them farewell.

The Sagol-Kengkhai Dance, inspired by the movements of wild boars in the jungle, played a significant role in Thadou-Kuki culture. Wild boars were involved in life-cycle rituals, including birth, marriage, and death, marked by their sacrifice for communal feasting. Additionally, wild boars were often sacrificial animals used to reconcile disputes between individuals or families or to settle penalties for defying societal norms and practices. This dance involved participants forming a circle, with both men and women intermingling and moving in a synchronized manner. At regular intervals, they would bend and straighten their knees. Two men and two women would then perform a dance in the centre, mimicking the march of a wild boar through the jungle. The folk dances are not merely a showcasing of art, rituals, or an act of recreation. They reflect the cultural lore, orientation and worldview of the community practicing them. They show what elements are important to the Thadou-Kukis, for example community life as also the centrality of the wild boar/pig in the customary practices and culture. Land is valued and the agricultural system as a life-giving source is deemed important; therefore, both were highly ritualized and celebrated. The Thadou-Kukis also believed in the concept of a benevolent God who is omnipotent and needs to be propitiated. Their belief in the continuation of life after death is evident from the kind of preparation that is being made for their journey into the world of the dead. The setting stage for folk dances has changed today from the village courtyard to the formal stages either of the state or of a social or political event.

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### **Political Elements of Chavang Kut**

Even in the past, the celebration of Chavang Kut had played a very important political function in the village administration. Any member of a village failing to participate in the post-harvesting festival without a proper justification for his or her absence was considered no longer a denizen of the village. It could affect their membership to the village. It was also a time of the year when a meeting would be held under the leadership of the village chief.

The villagers who were excommunicated from the village precinct due to some wrong-doing (s) or deviant behaviour were re-integrated to their village. They were known as Je-Changs (social loners) and they could also be excommunicated from the village due to an illness that was considered to be contagious or unclean. Even on the actual days of the celebration, it would be the Semang-Pachong (Minister to the Village Chief) who would guide and inaugurate the dancing session. It would be moderated by the leader of the Women's group (Nupi Lom). When the Haosa (Chief) of the village finally joins in, it is an indication that it is time for the villagers to disperse and the priest would formally close the ceremony.

### **The hill-valley dissent and its implications on the Chavang-Kut celebration**

There have been varied forms of contestation for land rights between the hill and valley communities in Manipur. The spatial pattern of ethnic groups in the state itself is a major source of contention and discontentment.

Manipur's population comprises three major ethnic groups: the Meiteis of the valley, and the Nagas and the Kukis of the surrounding hills. However, the hill-valley imbroglio is not a recent phenomenon. The hills and valley territories were administered differently by the British administrators on the justification that they both had entirely different customs and languages. On the eve of independence, the Manipur State Interim Council was formed to facilitate a separate hill administrative regulation. The state agencies in the post-colonial period have continued with the system adopted by the colonial rulers while making laws for the hill areas. Even today, Manipur is a society in which there is the presence of multiple ethnic groups, with varied positions on territorial

integrity, local governance and dual administrative governance of the Hills and the Valley.

The demand for Inner Line Permit Systems regulation in Manipur was fueled by a motive to control migration of 'outsiders (any non-Manipuris)' into the state. According to historians, the ILP previously known as the Bengal Inner Line Regulation of 1873 was introduced to keep outsiders from entering the hills, to confine the tribals across the inner line and prevent them from raiding the plains (not necessarily to protect the 'tribals') and to protect the interest of the British company. However, this line was never implemented in the Manipur State as it was largely autonomous till the year 1891.

The ILP movement resulted in the passing of three Bills in the Manipur State Assembly on 31 August 2015 and this evokes widespread opposition and protest from the various hill Tribes of Manipur. The three bills were: the Protection of Manipur People Bill, 2015; the Manipur Shops and Establishments (Second Amendment) Bill and the Manipur Land Revenue and Land Reforms (Seventh Amendment) Bill, 2015. The Hill tribes were suspicious of these bills and construed these to be a part of the dominant Meitei community's plan to dispossess them of their land by undermining Article 371 C and attempting for a uniform law therefore equalizing the land rights for both the hills and the valley communities by means of the MLR & LR, 2015 Act. The 7th amendment of the MLR (LRA), 2015 proposed the removal of the very section (158) which prohibits the sale of land belonging to Scheduled Tribe to a Non-Scheduled Tribe person without the prior consent of the Deputy Commissioner. Under section 14A, the state cabinet is given the final authority/final decision for the purchase of land by a non-Scheduled Tribe person. As soon as the bills were passed in the state Assembly there was an upsurge in the hills.

Many of the Tribes of Manipur, including the Thadou-Kukis refused to participate in the state-level Kut celebration held at Imphal in the year 2015 in solidarity with the Churachandpur incident. Kut in Imphal was sponsored and organised with the aid of the Manipur Government and therefore, the Tribals wanted to dissociate themselves

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with the celebration. It was also felt that the Imphal Kut celebration which honours' the Meitei MLAs and political leaders do not really represent the cultural life and lore of the people.

The low attendance at the Kut celebration in Imphal was still evident in 2016, one year after the grim incident of 2015. Parallel to the state-level Kut celebration, another one was started in Moreh town of Chandel district of Manipur. It was shifted to Churachandpur district from the year 2015. The celebration tries to bring back to memory all the practices and elements of the past that were associated with the festival. The chief guest for the event Mr Lalthanhawla, Chief Minister of Mizoram is carried on a bamboo palanquin as was the traditional practice with village chiefs in the past. The fact that the highest honour was given to the Chief Minister of Mizoram, a political leader in the neighboring state, rather than the political leaders of Manipur can be construed to be both a passive form of protest as also an identity assertion of their closer affinity or blood ties with the Mizos.

#### **Kut as a unifying and reconciliatory mechanism of the state: a failure**

In the past celebration of state-level Kut festival was an attempt to forge unity between the dominant Meitei communities and the various Tribes of the Chin-Kuki-Mizo group of people. As is the modern tradition every year, many political leaders and bureaucrats were made the dignitaries. Even in the State level Kut celebration 2022 witness participants from many Meitei dignitaries including the Chief agent of violence N. Biren Singh and endorser of Terrorist group Arambai Tenggol Sanajaoba. Unfortunately, this experiment to use Kut as a unifying and reconciliatory mechanism has failed, with many CSO's from the Kuki community opting to observe

this year Kut festival as a day of prayer for a separate administration away from the Meiteis. In fact, the Manipur Meitei government celebrated Kut by sending Meitei police commandos and Meitei terror group Arambai Tenggol to burn and loot houses at Sinam Village in Tengenoupal district. These are strong evidence of hatred and animosity projected by the Majority Meiteis against the Kukis. Hence, separated administration is the only solution.

#### **Clarion call to all the Kukis**

May this year post-harvesting festival bring together the Chin-Mizo-Kuki group of people on a common stage as brethren with a common origin, history, and culture; leading us to identity affirmation as it offers an opportunity to emphasize values, to announce, define, and re-affirm commitment to our people and our way of life. Let not the atrocities committed against us drag us down. Instead let it be the source of our strength in our fight against Meitei tyranny.

For the first time in India's independent history, we the Kukis are unable to celebrate the auspicious Chavang Kut festival. We are denied our Cultural Rights as enshrined in article 29. Since Chavang Kut is one of the medium of expressing our culture and traditions, the Meities have even denied us our right to freedom of expression as enshrined in art.19 of our Constitution. Meitei community in cohort with the government of Manipur has violated the fundamental rights of the Kukis. We are denied our rights in our ancestral lands. Therefore, all Kukis must resolve to defend our ancestral land and must not settle for nothing less than a Union territory so that we may celebrate the next Chavang Kut in a grandiose manner, free from the Tyranny of the Meiteis.



**Wrong does not cease to be wrong  
because the majority share in it.**

- Leo Tolstoy



THE BUZZ SOCIAL MEDIA

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The demise of Officer Anand in the prolonged Manipur conflicts is sad. His family deserves comprehensive support & assistance beyond mere condolences. Also, crucial for the govt to treat the family of fallen officer Haokip with equal respect & fairness, without preferential treatment



6:50 PM · 31/10/23 from Earth · 6.2K Views



Pramot Singh

5 h · 🌐

Poppy peisa na leiramba mee se haiphet yamba jatniko.

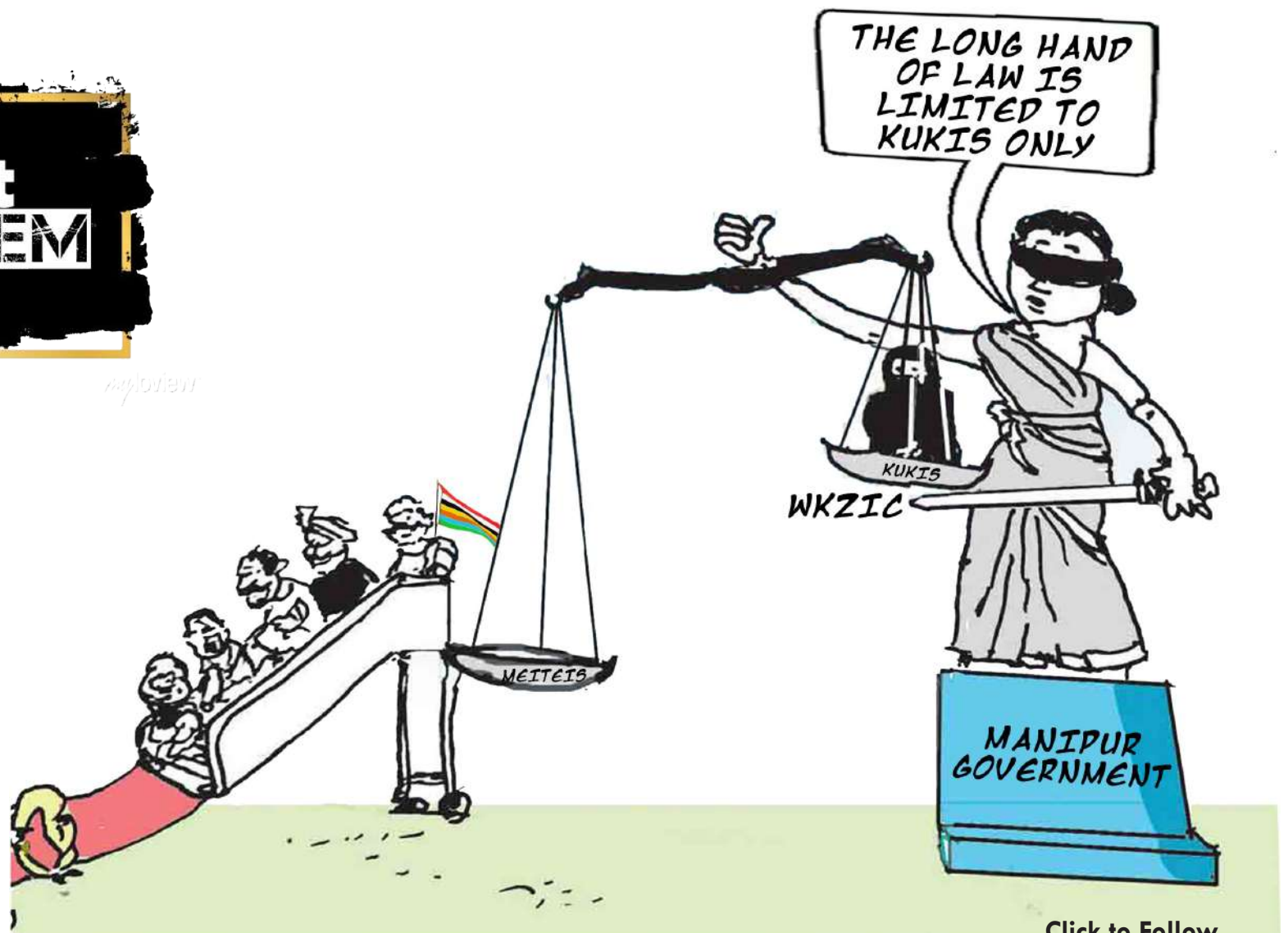
MEITEI LEEPUN HAS DESTROYED THE NOTION OF BIG BROTHER ROLE OF MEITEI COMMUNITY IN MANIPUR. IF SOMETHING UNFORTUNATE EVENT HAPPENS BECAUSE OF THEM, WOULD THEY TAKE RESPONSIBILITY? WE SHOULD NOT BE MEITEI CENTRIC AND BE INCLUSIVE

~KHURAIJAM ATHOUBA BASHED ON MEITEI LEEPUN

2:12 pm

👍👎 215

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# KUT CHIBAI

the drums will be silent,  
dances still as snow.  
on a blood soaked hill,  
and a valley of dead,  
here lies the remains of David's head.

who do you love?  
love them hard.  
life in wavering,  
in a winter of shadows and dark.

stop all the celebrations.  
drop all your expectations.  
Olivia's clothes have washed up  
in the same river you cried  
your prayers of intercession.

the mountains are weeping,  
they burn and they're burned.  
and the men in camouflage  
have no place of return.

*~Angela Kimzouzam Khongsai*







# CHAVANG KUT

In the heart of Chin-Kuki-Mizo's land so grand,  
Chavang Kut, a celebration of blessings in our land.  
A festival that shines with cultural delight,  
A time of joy, abundance, from morning to night.

Drums and dances, the beat of ancient lore,  
Tales of ancestors, rich customs to explore.  
In colorful attire, we come together, unite,  
To celebrate the harvest, in the warm autumn light.

Oh, this year, how it saddens the soul,  
Chavang Kut's absence takes a heavy toll.  
Ethnic violence clouds our land with despair,  
Our community, in pain, stands in prayer.

We hope for a day, with hearts full of cheer,  
When Chavang Kut's melody once again we'll hear.  
With unity and peace, under the sky so blue,  
In the morrow, our festival will start anew.

For now, we pray to God, above so high,  
To heal our land, let old wounds go by.  
Chavang Kut's return, like the sunrise so near,  
When laughter and love will replace every tear.

*~Jacob Kipgen.*

