

Thingkho Le Malcha

THURSDAY | OCTOBER 19, 2023



Sadbhavna Mandap RELIEF CENTRE

Khominthang, New Lamka

Managed by Young Paite Association (New Lamka Relief Committee)

Total Inmates Registered: 68*

■ Male: 32

■ Female: 36

VILLAGES COVERED

Lamphel, Imphal
New Checkon, Imphal
Langgol, Imphal
Game Village, Imphal
Paite Veng, Imphal
Laimanai, Imphal
Sugnu Area

*As on 7th September, 2023



KUKI VICTIMS' UPDATE

As on 16.10.2023



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.

KUKI INPI RE-AFFIRMS ITS STAND ON SEPARATE ADMINISTRATION AT DELHI CONCLAVE

The Kuki Inpi has once again re-affirmed its commitment for Separate Administration of the Kuki-Zo people at Delhi Conclave held on October 16, 2023.

The Delhi Conclave, organised by the Kuki supreme body, was attended by various Kuki Civil Society Organizations including the Kuki Inpi Manipur, Kuki Students' Organization, Kuki Women Union, Kuki Women Organization for Human Rights, Kuki Khanglai Lawmpi, etc.

Various contentious issues confronting the Kuki society were deliberated at length, after which a 10-point declaration was adopted.

The main points of the declaration included re-affirming of separate administration for the Kuki-Zo people, to establish better co-ordination with kindred tribes for



realization of the political demand and to wholeheartedly support the Zo United – a coordinating platform formed for better co-ordination with the neighbouring state of Mizoram.

VALLEY-BASED STUDENTS' CONVENTION ADOPTS SEVERAL RESOLUTIONS INCLUDING INITIATION OF STRONG DEMONSTRATIONS FOR NRC IMPLEMENTATION

The students' convention held in Imphal on Thursday has adopted a nine-point resolutions in regards to the role of students in rooting out narco-terrorism, protecting indigenous communities, territorial integrity of Manipur, developing economic activities and implementation of National Register of Citizens.

The convention was jointly organised by the All Manipur Students' Union (AMSU), Manipuri Students' Federation (MSF), Democratic Students' Association Manipur (DESAM), Kangleipak Students' Association (KSA), Students' Union of Kangleipak (SUK) and Apunba Imagi Maheirrol Singpanglup (AIMS) at Khuman Lampak, Imphal.

The convention resolved to protect the indigenous communities from the adverse wave of foreign influx by continuing to initiate strong demonstrations for the implementation of the National Register of Citizens (NRC) in Manipur so as to deport foreigners who enter illegally in Manipur, after due detection.

It resolved that the students would take necessary responsibility to root out the Narco-Terrorism from the soil of Manipur to protect the indigenous communities in the present crisis through defeating

the Narco-Terrorists' ongoing warfare in the State.

The resolutions also included taking more responsibility to protect the indigenous communities of the State, to uphold integrity unitedly and taking more accountability in the confrontation of threats challenging the territorial integrity of Manipur.

Further, it was also resolved that the students would stand united against the attack from the drugs or Narco-Chemical warfare to protect the youths who are the future pillars of society.

The students' organisation resolved to stand unitedly against the heinous actions of the security forces towards the students. Other resolutions included ensuring human resources and capital knowledge for the coming generations in the educational institutions and to make sure that there are no hindrances in the learning process.

To work collectively through integration of those split up student communities and refraining from narrow minded views in order to implement the adopted resolutions was also among the resolutions.

COCOMI DISAPPOINTED WITH GOVT'S INABILITY TO SEND STATE FORCES TO MOREH

Disappointed with Manipur government's inability to send State forces in Moreh, the Coordinating Committee on Manipur Integrity (COCOMI) has raised its doubts on whether the present regime has its actual existence in governing the State.

Claiming that a situation has been felt like a war between different countries, the Coordinator of COCOMI, Jeetendra Ningomba, said the State government should know that people are not satisfied with such situation. The people have been raising questions on whether there are separate laws in Hills and Valleys in Manipur, he said while briefing the media on Thursday.

"It is unfortunate that the State forces cannot enter Kangpoki, Churachandpur and Moreh," he said, adding that such denying of movement and stationing of State forces to the Hills by certain people was

not expected to happen in a democratic country.

The State and Central forces were proactive in dealing with student protesters by using rubber bullets, smoke bombs and even pellet guns. However, they have not been able to enter Moreh till date, he said.

The security forces in Moreh have been claiming that they could not perform their duties as required since they have not received any order/instruction from the government, Jeetendra said.

Encouraging the security forces in Moreh to perform their duties as required by the situation, COCOMI assured them that the people of Manipur stands by them and are willing to face any action arising out of the higher authorities in case of any eventuality.

SEGA ROAD FIRING CASE: THREE MORE INDIVIDUALS ARRESTED INCLUDING BJYM VICE-PRESIDENT; BARISH SHARMA STILL WALKS FREE

The Vice-President of the Bharatiya Janata Yuva Morcha (BJYM), Manipur Pradesh, N. Tony Meitei, was one among the three persons who have been arrested for their alleged involvement in the Segga Road firing case in Imphal, the incident which resulted in injuring five civilians including a woman.

The arrest was made on Wednesday and after being produced before the Duty Magistrate, Imphal West, the arrested persons were remanded into police custody till next Wednesday.

The arrested persons have been identified as one Nongthombam Tony Meitei (36) S/o (L) N. Kumar of Langthabal Mayai Leikai, who is also the Vice President of BJYM Manipur Pradesh; Ningthoujam Vicky (30) S/o N. Bhorot of Kongba Nandeibam Leikai and Khaidem Nibas (33) S/o Kh. Lukhoi of Singjamei Wangma Pebiya Pandit Leikai.

The firing incident took place on Saturday at around 10.40 pm at Segga Road Khwairakpam Leikai, Imphal West, when some armed miscreants, while trying to abduct one Khaidem Seitajit alias Bobo from his residence, opened fire towards the locals including Meira Paibis of the area, who tried to stop the activities of the miscreants.



Meanwhile, the JAC formed in connection with the firing incident at Segga Road has urged the concerned authorities to arrest the former BJYM President, Manoharmayum Barish Sharma, who they said is a prime accused in the case.

Claiming that the Police were unable to arrest the prime accused Barish Sharma and seize the weapons used in the crime till today, the JAC Convenor, Iboyaima, appealed the Government to do the needful at the earliest.

Iboyaima also urged all Ministers and MLAs not to interfere in the work of the Police and cautioned that any MLAs or Ministers found shielding the accused would face the wrath of the people.

NAGPUR UNIVERSITY HELPS 10 KUKI STUDENTS TAKE UP EDUCATION

Jangkhomang Haokip hasn't met his parents since April when he barely escaped the ethnic violence unleashed across Manipur. Haokip, a first-year MSc Mathematics student, has not returned to his hometown in Churachandpur district since then. He along with over 30 other Kuki community students ended up in Nagpur in September before a brief stay at Guwahati and Delhi.

As the bloodbath sabotaged their careers, Haokip and nine others from the Manipur University finally found support in Nagpur University (NU), which has accommodated them in various postgraduate programmes. The special move to enroll conflict-hit students from Manipur is probably one of its kind initiative to help the needy while their home state remains in unrest.

It wasn't easy for the 10 Kuki students to get admissions though, because their original educational documents were burnt down with the rest of their belongings in different hostels under Manipur University.

Haokip had just completed his first semester when the state went into turmoil. "I stayed in a camp for a day and then left for Guwahati. Later, I came to Delhi and worked for a while. My employer connected us to a civil society group that facilitated our stay in Nagpur," he said.

The students include seven men and three women. They are putting up at different hostels in Civil Lines. "We have got free accommodation but food needs to be paid for," he said, adding that funds are fast drying up.

Prashant Tambe, director of NGO 'Sankalp', assisted the students. "The impact of Manipur violence is not known, though it is more serious and requires more attention. We are only aware of the atrocities on common people.



The rift shouldn't have reached educational institutions. Some of the affected were PhD scholars".

"Hundreds of students are reaching out to us via a tribal activist. We are doing the best we can," he said.

Senate member Shrikant Bhowte, professor Ajay Chaudhary and professor Manish Thakre helped with the admission process.

Bhowte said initially they thought of only extending financial aid to the students. The Vice-Chancellor too was apprehensive of admitting them because of "technical issues". "I explained to him (VC) that the university can modify norms. Besides, student welfare fund can be utilized as it is earmarked for such cases," the Senate member said.

A list of 44 such students was drawn of which 34 names were sent out some opted out due to the delay in providing approval.

The NU management council permitted the admissions subject to equivalence of syllabus and police verification. "The students will have to compulsorily complete one year of course in the university," Bhowte said.

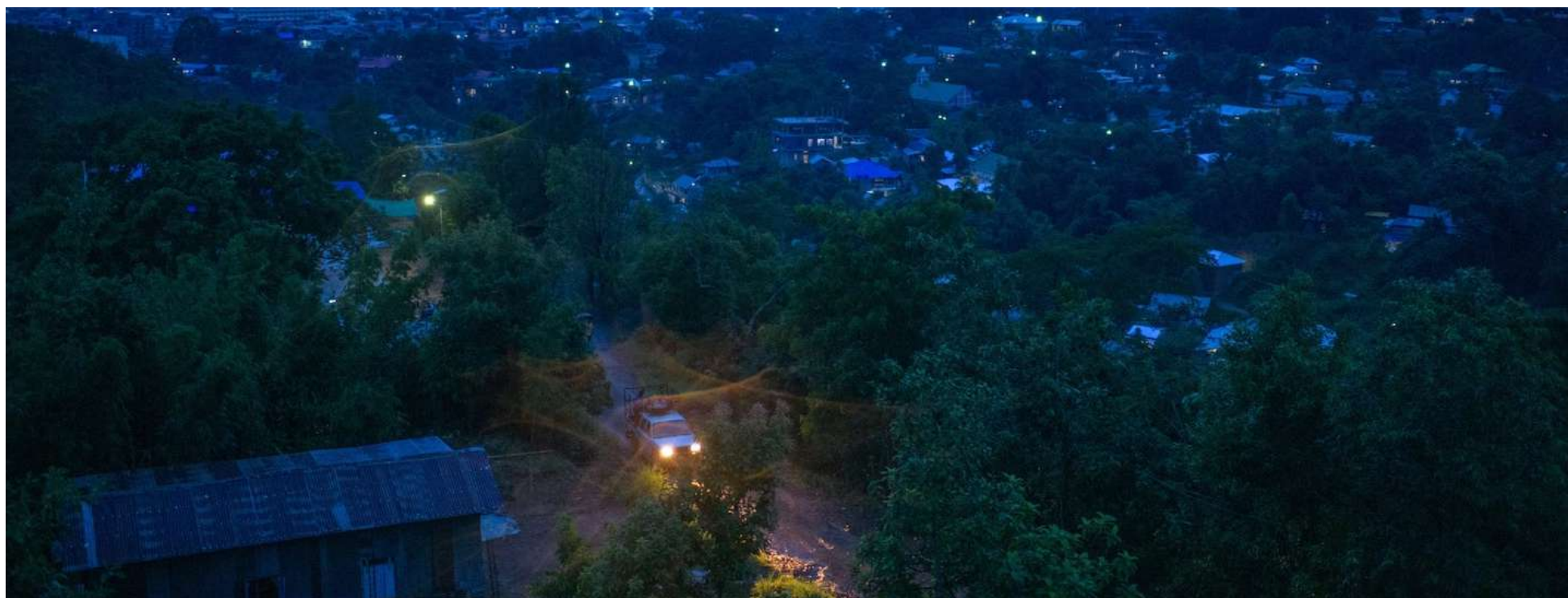


All war is a symptom of man's failure as a thinking animal.

— John Steinbeck

INDIA USES WIDESPREAD INTERNET BLACKOUTS TO MASK DOMESTIC TURMOIL

By Anant Gupta and Gerry Shih



During times of civil unrest and political turmoil, authorities around the world frequently cut access to the internet to control their populations and throttle the flow of information. The militaries in Sudan and Myanmar pulled the plug when they carried out armed coups in 2021. Iran flipped the switch when protesters flooded the streets following the death a year ago of a young woman, Mahsa Amini, in police custody.

But the country that most frequently deploys the tactic is not an authoritarian state such as Russia or China, digital rights groups say.

It is India.

Between 2016 and this May, India accounted for more than half of all the shutdowns recorded worldwide by an international coalition of more than 300 digital rights groups led by Access Now, a nonprofit. On more than 680 occasions during that period, state and local officials in India issued legal orders requiring the country's handful of telecommunication companies to suspend mobile data transmission from cell towers and freeze wired broadband connections.

Indian officials argue that the measure is necessary to prevent the spread of online rumors and contain unrest.

But by enforcing a digital blackout, critics say, the government can stifle dissent, cover up abuses and stymie independent reporting that challenges official accounts during times of conflict. The tactic can also exact a drastic, far-reaching economic toll, disrupting commerce, work and education.

In a report last year about the global use of blackouts, the U.N. High Commissioner for Human Rights warned that the practice infringes on basic rights of expression and may do more harm than good during times of upheaval. "The inability to access tools to document and rapidly report abuses seems to contribute to further violence, including atrocities," the U.N. agency said. "Some shutdowns may even be implemented with the deliberate intent of covering up human rights violations."

Since May, when ethnic bloodshed erupted in Manipur state, in northeast India, the state government controlled by Prime Minister Narendra Modi's Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) has enforced a draconian internet ban affecting the state's 3 million people — one of the longest recorded shutdowns in the world — as violence between two ethnic groups spread from village to village, leaving more than 200 dead.

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In three visits to the remote, lushly forested state bordering Myanmar, Washington Post journalists saw how severing the internet — considered a modern necessity, almost a basic right by many — upended daily lives and livelihoods practically overnight. Countless workers found themselves out on the street, and hospitals, with online payment systems suspended, struggled to keep operating.

Moreover, the internet shutdown shaped the Manipur conflict in profound ways. It allowed the BJP state government — and the state's ethnic Meitei majority who control it — to dominate the public narrative about the turmoil. It impeded efforts by dissenters among the Kuki ethnic minority to spread their message and disseminate photo and video evidence of human rights abuses. And it effectively kept the roiling conflict, a stark challenge to the BJP's leadership, behind a veil of invisibility.

While local governments ruled by opposition parties in India also frequently block the internet, the Manipur example highlights a wider pattern in an India governed over the past decade by Modi's BJP. To maintain their grip on political power and advance their Hindu nationalist agenda, Modi and his ideological allies have often used their control of technology and social media to stifle dissent, promote divisive propaganda — or, in the case of Manipur, pull the digital plug altogether.

After a viral video emerged online in July of Kuki women being groped and paraded naked in a Meitei village, drawing international attention and concern about sexual violence in the Manipur conflict, several BJP leaders, including the state's chief minister, N. Biren Singh, voiced frustration that the video had surfaced and alleged in media interviews that it had been intentionally "leaked" from Manipur to hurt them politically. The chief minister's office and spokespeople for the Manipur state government declined multiple interview requests for this article.

To pierce the information veil, Kuki activists this year mounted a digital resistance.

Some secretly connected internet cables from an adjacent state to a college campus, where they huddled to spread

word of their people's plight. Others pursued old-school, shoe-leather journalism, forming teams to visit refugee camps and document allegations of war crimes, and collected evidence by transferring videos via Bluetooth or USB drives. Still others drove hours to the border, where they tapped into the faint cellphone signal to download independent commentary about the conflict.

On a Sunday morning in early July, one of these activists stood in a crowd and she listened intently to dozens of exhausted Kuki villagers recounting a terrifying tale.

Before sunrise that day, the displaced Kukis said, an armed mob of Meiteis had appeared, setting fire to their homes in the nearby foothills. Then the villagers made a stunning allegation: A 30-year-old Kuki named David Thiek was decapitated, his limbs sawed off and his head placed on a bamboo spike.

The activist — a former call center manager with a bubbly laugh and quiet intensity named Jhmar — belonged to the Indigenous Tribal Leaders' Forum (ITLF), a pro-Kuki organization, as a volunteer in its "media cell." Her job, she said, was to find and confirm reports about atrocities, then spread the word to the outside world, a challenge given the internet ban. But here, a nugget of firsthand information had found its way to her. (Jhmar recounted the episode on the condition that she be identified only by her tribal name, fearing government retribution.)

She immediately hopped on a motorbike and rode off into the hills.

A world leader in blackouts

Since 2020, India has been the leader in ordering internet shutdowns, far outpacing Iran and Myanmar, in second and third spots, respectively, according to Access Now. Indian government officials can issue blocking orders that cover relatively small districts or encompass vast states with millions of people. The blackouts tend to last for a few days, though they're often renewed, and some stretch on for months.

Two months ago, a shutdown was imposed in Haryana

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state, ostensibly to control riots, and a blackout in March, affecting 27 million people, was enforced in Punjab state during efforts to catch fugitives. In February, the internet was blocked in 11 cities in Rajasthan state to prevent cheating during exams.

The longest recorded instance came in August 2019, when the Modi government revoked the semiautonomous status of the northern Jammu and Kashmir region and brought this restive Muslim-majority area directly under New Delhi's control, sparking protests and an Indian army crackdown that included waves of detentions. The government cut phone lines and shut down high-speed internet for 18 months to curb what officials called the spread of disinformation from Pakistan.

But with the flow of information severed and journalists unable to work, it took weeks for allegations to surface that the Indian army had tortured detainees, among them minors, said Anuradha Bhasin, the executive editor of the Kashmir Times who is now a fellow at Stanford University.

"Seven million people in Kashmir and Muslim-majority areas of Jammu were completely pushed behind an iron curtain," said Bhasin. "Shutting down critical reporting was one of the intended consequences."

After Bhasin challenged the internet shutdown in court, the Indian Supreme Court ruled in 2020 that the tactic should be used only for a limited time and only if absolutely essential, adding that the justification must be publicized. But authorities often ignore the court's recommendations, say Indian civil rights lawyers.

The clampdown begins

The unrest in Manipur began on April 27. Kuki activists called for a general strike against the land policies of the state's chief minister that day, and the demonstration turned violent.

Tensions had been brewing for months between the Kukis, a Christian hill tribe, and Meiteis, the politically and economically dominant valley dwellers who mostly practice Hinduism. Kukis have long accused Meiteis of coveting land in the hills reserved under the Indian constitution for tribal peoples, and those fears sharpened this spring when the state's top court backed a Meitei



demand that it also be granted official tribal status.

At first, the state government ordered an internet blackout around Churachandpur, a city that forms the heart of Manipur's Kuki population. But mayhem erupted anyway. On May 3, mob violence spread statewide, leading to two days of killing, rape and arson. While both sides were targeted, most victims were Kuki, according to the U.N. human rights office. Roaming death squads killed anyone they could find of the other ethnicity. Up to 60,000 people were displaced.

The state ordered telecom providers to kill the internet, and a digital darkness fell over Manipur. The resistance began.

Getting the word out

For Ginza Vualzong, a gregarious leader in the pro-Kuki ITLF who heads its "media cell," the first task was tracking down a local technician who quietly dealt in special phone lines — an internet bootlegger. After weeks of negotiations, an eye-watering payment exceeding \$1,000 and a flick of a router switch one day in late May, Vualzong turned the media cell office in Churachandpur into an oasis of WiFi, with slow, finicky, but unfettered internet piped in from a neighboring state.

To counter stories in newspapers and carried by television stations under the BJP government's sway, one volunteer assembled a news bulletin every day and distributed hard copies to curious readers who queued up for them. Another team visited hospitals and camps for displaced people to document war crime allegations and uploaded oral histories to YouTube.

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“What we’re fighting is a narrative war,” said Vualzong, who described most of his day-to-day work as “firefighting” against government propaganda.

As the conflict raged, the Indian government prohibited foreign journalists from visiting Manipur. In the Indian media, it was mostly English-language newspapers with relatively few readers and small, online-only news outlets that closely covered both sides of the conflict.

But with its secret internet line, the media cell managed to score small victories. In July, Jhmar and her team facilitated an interview with a Kuki woman who was beaten nearly to death by a mob with a writer for the popular Instagram page Humans of Bombay — an Indian account inspired by Humans of New York with 3 million followers.

The post got 21,000 likes. It was nothing like making the front page of a national newspaper. But their people were starved of any outside attention, Jhmar said: “Every channel, be it small or big, is important for us right now.”

Return to a dark age

As the media cell huddled daily near its office hotspot, life outside changed dramatically for millions of people plunged into an earlier technological era.

At the Raj Medicity in Imphal, Manipur’s capital, hospital director Vijayraj Haobijam, 29, ticked off his mounting difficulties. Without internet access, he couldn’t receive timely reimbursements from the national health insurance program or digital payments from patients. His employees were working on half-salary.

“Even the covid lockdowns were not so difficult because that was not a war,” he said. “We had internet.”

On the boulevards of Imphal, the stately former seat of the Meitei monarchy, long lines snaked out from ATMs, because the demand for cash skyrocketed after India’s digital payments system suddenly became unavailable. The back streets were devoid of the food and package delivery boys ubiquitous even in small Indian towns, because the e-commerce companies paused local services. The offices that provide the white-collar jobs so many Indians aspire to were shuttered overnight.

Grunting and sweating outside a water packaging plant in Churachandpur, Janet Lalthiengzo, 27, wrapped a dozen bottles and heaved the package onto a truck — a job she never imagined she’d be doing after graduating from college and working for a company doing search engine optimization. But with the internet severed, Lalthiengzo found herself packing water bottles for \$3 a day, a third of what she once made.

“Even if I get paid less, I have to work,” said Lalthiengzo.

On a recent evening, three Kukis gathered on a grassy hilltop bathed in moonlight. Locals knew it was possible to pick up a faint cellphone signal, but no one knew if it came from the neighboring state of Mizoram or Myanmar.

Siamkhanlal, 51, yelped with delight as 46 messages came flooding into his WhatsApp at once. He needed to download pay slips for his church group. People came to the hill for all kinds of reasons, he explained: to do homework, make payments or download the latest information about the fighting.

Another villager, O.K. Luna, wasn’t so lucky. He wanted a glimpse of his daughter Margaret, who had flown that morning to Italy to resume her job on a cruise liner. He clutched a phone in each hand, cajoling them to connect. He gave up after more than 90 minutes.

The veil briefly lifts

On May 4 — the second and, by most accounts, worst day of fighting — came a defining moment of the Manipur conflict.

A 26-second video showing dozens of Meitei men that day molesting two naked Kuki women, grabbing their genitals as they were paraded down a narrow concrete road and into dry paddy fields. There, relatives of the Kuki women alleged, they were raped off-camera.

For two and a half months, the video never surfaced. No arrests were made, no headlines created. But finally, the video made its way to social media. Instantly, it had an impact.

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A body of U.N. human rights experts expressed alarm about what was happening on the ground. Modi, who had stayed away from Manipur and remained quiet about the conflict since it erupted, broke his silence after 78 days, telling the Indian people that “what has happened to these daughters of Manipur can never be forgiven.” The wheels of justice finally began to churn. Seven men were detained within days and handed to the federal investigative agency.

In a country where national politics is often driven by spectacle and social media outrage, capturing and sharing visuals is “the only time you are getting a response from those in power,” said Sevanti Ninan, a longtime media critic. “Manipur has long been invisible partly because of the mainland attitude to that state. The internet shutdown makes it further invisible.”

Hoaxes and rumors

But on the Meitei side, the emergence of the video fueled bewilderment and frustration.

Along the rain-soaked rice paddies of Pechi village, near where the video was shot, Meiteis wondered why they were denied internet when they too were regularly assaulted.

Two fuming Meitei women, who spoke on the condition of anonymity to address an incident that they said unfairly tarnished their village name, stopped sowing rice to vent. The attack on the Kuki women, they said, was in revenge for a rumored attack on Meitei girls.

Yet “the narrative is one-sided against us,” said one of the women. “Without internet, we cannot get photos and videos of what happened to our people.”

Khuraijam Athouba, the spokesperson of the Coordinating Committee on Manipur Integrity, the top civilian group representing Meitei interests in the conflict, said the internet shutdown was making the conflict worse by fueling hoaxes and rumors. Even Meiteis detested it, he said.

“People make more assumptions,” Athouba said, “because they are not getting the right information, at the right time.”



Compiling the evidence

As soon as she heard news of David Thiek’s July 2 death, Jhmar rushed on a motorbike to Saikot village, where Thiek’s family were seeking refuge after fleeing their home in Langza, 20 miles away.

Details were still trickling in about the pre-dawn attack on Langza. As waves of refugees arrived throughout the day, they brought more photos and videos that created, piece by piece, a fuller, terrifying account of destruction and savagery.

Videos showed Kuki volunteers rummaging through rubble, searching for Thiek’s remains. They gathered his charred bones and placed them on a traditional stole spread on the ground. One photo showed the blood-streaked bamboo fence where his head had been mounted.

Jhmar used Nearby Share, a Bluetooth file-sharing app, to gather every photo and video she could from Thiek’s friends, family and witnesses. For a week, she worked with her media cell colleagues to put together a memorial video. The group released it on their YouTube channel on July 13.

The only consolation

On July 24, Jhmar scored another small win. A team from CNN-News 18, a national TV network, caught wind of Thiek’s killing, and Jhmar brought the crew to interview his family. But after that, outside attention fizzled out again.

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Mobile internet was briefly restored on Sept. 23, and disturbing photos immediately surfaced on social media, this time showing the corpses of two young Meiteis allegedly killed by Kukis. Authorities arrested the suspected killers before severing the internet again on Sept. 26.

In Churachandpur, Jhmar fell into a gloom. She felt she hadn't done enough to spread word about the violence. How could she, given Manipur's internet outage that began in early May?

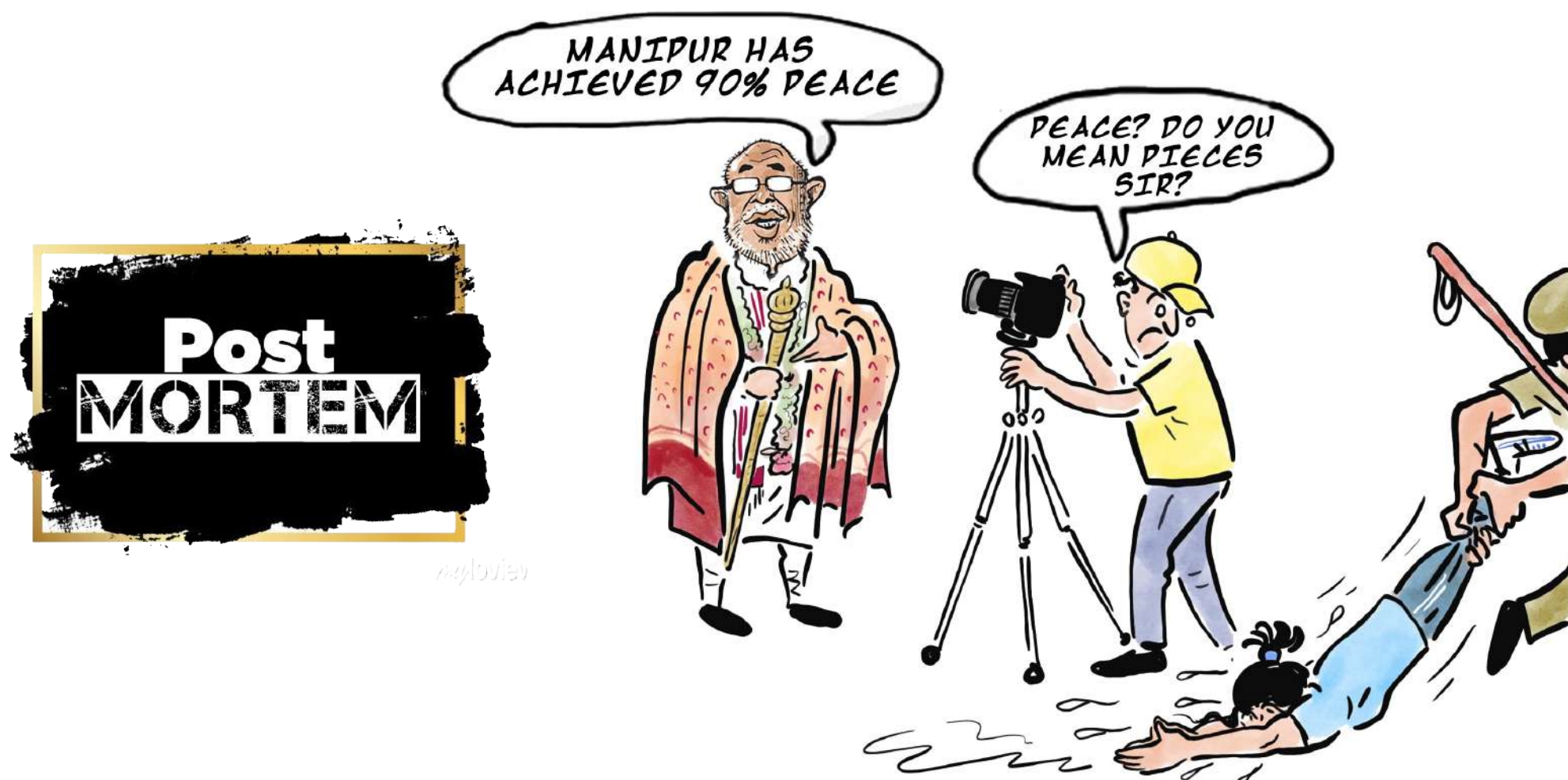
On Sept. 2, the Editors Guild of India, a professional group of journalists that had visited Manipur on a fact-finding mission, released a report saying the internet ban had impeded the work of journalists, who were forced to rely "almost entirely on the narrative of the state government" and produced shoddy, one-sided reporting.

Jhmar said her only consolation was that Thiek's slaying had been documented, saved for a day of reckoning when the digital darkness lifts.

"The only thing we can do," she said, "is keep bringing out the stories as much as we can so that the world knows."

Two days later, the Manipur government filed a criminal case against the editors association for "promoting enmity between different groups."

SOURCE: [THE WASHINGTON POST](#)





MY LAND MY CULTURE MY IDENTITY

My Land My Culture My Identity
My traditions and customs My dignity
My knees on the ground, I bow to Almighty
For once and all He will give us Victory.

Let's trace back and zoom-in the past
Anglo-Kuki War, we fought the British, too
Fearless and Bravery, that was bulletproof
Our ancestors' blood runs in our veins, too.

Gazing up in the sky, we plan for the day
The stones and trees, we speak the same
Hills and Mountains, they define who we are
Our forefathers gave us by blood for eternity.

They belong to us, and We belong to them.
With pride and honour, we defend our ancestral land
We fight for our future, for generations to come
Ethnic cleansing was a good attempt but a blunder.

We hunt at night and gather food at day
We howl to claim our territory
It's a sign to act cautiously
We are blessed. That's why jealousy?

Our values are deeply rooted with integrity
We fight for Justice with no heart of animosity
We pay tribute and respect to all fallen Heroes
We will rise like Phoenix from the Ashes.

My Land My Culture My Identity
My traditions and customs My dignity
Knees on the ground, we bow to Almighty
For once and all, it shall be our History.

~ Gugun Kipgen