

Thingkho Le Malcha

A Daily Newsletter by KSO Media & Documentation Cell



EBCC Bungmual RELIEF CENTRE

Bungmual, Lamka

Managed by Young Paite Association

Total Inmates Registered: 116*

■ Male: 55

■ Female: 61

VILLAGES COVERED

- Tribal Colony, Imphal
- NGV Imphal
- Paite Veng Imphal
- Torbung
- Langol, Imphal
- S. Nabil
- Lampheh, Imphal

*As on 1st 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.

N. BIREN SINGH: THE CHIEF ARCHITECT OF ETHNIC VIOLENCE IN MANIPUR



Taking note of a very pertinent question on 'Who actually fueled the conflict in Manipur,' raised by the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) Chief, Mohan Bhagwat, on Tuesday, the Indigenous Tribal Leaders' Forum (ITLF) has responded by giving the answer as "N. Biren Singh," the Chief Minister of Manipur.

"The violence was planned and executed by radicals of the majority community. So, the simple answer to Mr Bhagwat's "Who is instigating the violence?" question is: Biren..," ITLF said in a press release issued on Tuesday.

Bhagwat, while addressing the RSS Dessehra rally in Nagpur, asked if extremists across the border were involved in Manipur violence. Asserting that the Meitei and Kuki communities have been living together for many years, RSS Chief asked, "How did the violence erupt all of a sudden? The conflict benefits external forces. Are external factors involved?"

The tribal body also raised some other relevant questions which need to be answered before one can reply to RSS Chief. It questioned why there were no clashes between the majority Meiteis and Kuki-Zo tribals in all the years before the BJP and CM Biren Singh came to power. (Mr Bhagwat himself said, "Meiteis and Kukis were living together for a long time.")

ITLF asked: "Why did Meitei's belligerence become pronounced and quickly intensified during Biren Singh's tenure? Why did gun-toting and hate-spewing radical groups like Arambai Tenggol and Meitei Leepun

suddenly gain prominence in the past couple of years?" It also asks the rationale behind removing AFSPA recently only in Meitei-dominated districts and not in tribal areas. "This is bewildering since government-designated terror groups operate in the Imphal valley while armed groups in the hills are under suspension of operation with the state and center," said Ginza Vualzong, Spokesperson ITLF.

The Spokesperson further questioned as to why the government notification of 1966 regarding "reserved" and "protected" forests under the Indian Forest Act, 1927 was suddenly implemented in 2023, that too without following procedures laid down by the Act, which includes consulting the stakeholders.

"Why were all of the above followed by a sudden resurgence in the Meitei demand for ST status, the branding of Kuki-Zo tribals as "illegal immigrants" and the blaming of tribals for the state's drug menace?" ITLF asked, adding, "The sad truth is that the chief minister followed a majoritarian and integrationist policy on the minority on the advice of chauvinist intellectuals of his community."

The tribal leaders' forum claimed that what Manipur witnessed in the past few years was a highly coordinated assault on the rights and protections that tribals enjoyed under the Constitution, all in the name of preserving and extending the Meiteis' domination of minorities.

"Ironically, it included an attempt to get a minority tag in the form of ST status. This resulted in a pushback by tribals in the form of protests and rallies," ITLF added.

‘PM NARENDRA MODI ABANDONED MANIPUR’: JAIRAM RAMESH RAISES N BIREN SINGH QUERY ON VIOLENCE

Congress leader Jairam Ramesh on Tuesday posted a set of 5 questions for Prime Minister Narendra Modi on X on the 175th day of violence in Manipur, asking why N Biren Singh is still being allowed to continue as the chief minister of the state. Ramesh accused PM Modi of abandoning the people of Manipur when they needed his “intervention and outreach” the most.

“The people of Manipur and the entire Northeast are closely watching how the Prime Minister has abandoned the state of Manipur at a time when his intervention and outreach was needed the most. He cannot escape accountability and responsibility by completely ignoring the crisis,” he wrote on X.

“Why is the CM who is so thoroughly discredited across sections of Manipur’s society still being allowed to continue?” he added.

In his attack, Ramesh claimed the Union Minister of State of External Affairs who represents Manipur (Inner) in the Lok Sabha (RK Ranjan Singh), hadn’t been able to meet PM Modi.



He claimed PM Modi only spoke on the subject of violence for five minutes.

“Why has the PM who pontificates on all subjects not seen it fit to speak on Manipur publicly for more than 4-5 minutes at most, that too in a routine manner and after immense pressure from the Opposition?” he wrote.

He asked why PM Modi, “who loves to travel at the drop of a hat”, did not visit Manipur to show his concern.

RESTRICTION OF CBI INVESTIGATION STILL EXISTS IN IMPHAL VALLEY

Amidst tall claims made by N. Biren Singh on improvement of law and order situation in Imphal, denying of free movement to the central agency for investigation still exists.

On Tuesday, a sit-in protest against the repeated visits of the Central Bureau Investigation (CBI) was held at Naoremthong Khulem Leikai, restricting the entry of the central agency inside the locality.

One of the protestors said, “Government should be held responsible if anything happened (through CBI investigation) by defying the Meira Paibis’ demand to stop the investigation.”

Different placards were displayed at the sit-in protest which was organized by Nupi singgi Apunba Yaipha Lup, Naoremthong Khulem Leikai,

along with different Meira paibis of the area.

A member of Nupi singgi Apunba Yaipha Lup said that the repeated visits of the CBI in the locality by asking several questions about the whereabouts of the people living there, about an incident which happened at the said locality after the violence broke out on May 3, etc., were not necessary as Lamphel Police Station is available to do the needful.

In the wake of the ethnic violence, the Central Bureau of Investigation has been entrusted to investigate at least 27 cases including crimes against women. There were also instances of blocking a CBI team who went to investigate arms looted cases at Pangei Police Training Centre, Imphal.

GOVT OFFICES IN NAGA AREAS SHUTDOWN OVER INTERNET BAN



As declared earlier, the All Naga Students' Association Manipur (ANSAM), supported by its constituent units, has begun shutting down of government offices in Naga dominated districts on Tuesday. As per sources from Tangkhul Katamnao Saklong, a Tangkhul students' body, all Government offices including Mini-Secretariat, Autonomous District Council office, Public Health and Engineering Department, Zonal Education Office, forest offices, Punjab National Bank, United Commercial Bank(UCO), all within the jurisdiction of TKS, were completely shutdown.

Meanwhile, the Rongmei Naga Students' Organisation Manipur (RNSOM) also informed The Hills Journal that they also effectively imposed the shutdown in Tamenglong and Noney districts. Anal Students' Union based in Chandel also informed that government offices were closed in Chandel district as well. Earlier, demanding restoration of mobile internet in

peaceful areas of the State and declaration of the results of the interview held in September 2021 for appointment of 190 posts of assistant professors for government colleges of Manipur at the earliest, the All Naga Students' Association Manipur (ANSAM) had declared that they would launch picketing of the government offices in the hills districts of Manipur from October 23 to October 25. ANSAM had issued a release on Sunday stating that picketing of government offices would be launched as their first step of agitation demanding to immediately lift the order of internet shutdown and restoration of internet connectivity in the peaceful areas of the state. ANSAM had also warned that they might also intensify the agitation if the legitimate demands are not fulfilled. The association on October 17 had served five days dateline to the central government and the state government to fulfill the demands placed by the association.

THERE IS A PROCESS OF UNLF- PAMBEI FACTION SIGNING SOO WITH GOI, SAYS N. BIREN SINGH

In connection to the spreading of unconfirmed message of Indian Government signing a ceasefire agreement with UNLF-Pambei group, the Chief Minister, N. Biren Singh, has said that there is a process of signing a Suspension of Operation (SoO) with one of the Meitei militant groups with the Government of India.

N. Biren Singh, however, denied the knowledge of whether it was inked or not. He said this during a media query at the sideline of Foundation Stones laying programme of various projects held at Leitanpokpham

Pologround, Andro, Imphal East, on Tuesday.

"There is a process of signing SoO with one of the Meitei-based proscribed groups with the Government of India. But whether it was inked or not I don't have any idea. If such a thing is happened, they should have informed me. But the process is there," said N Biren Singh.

He also said that the people would be happy if it is being signed as it would help to bring peace.

**EXCLUSIVE****MAYHEM IN MANIPUR UNIVERSITY**

The violence that has taken place in Manipur since May 3 has uprooted many lives. One of the worst affected groups in the ongoing conflict is the students belonging to the Kuki-Zo community at Manipur University. Many of them were on the verge of completing their post-graduate courses and the final submission of their PhD thesis. Their academic career has been abruptly cut short by the ethnic violence. On the evening of May 3, as the violence spread in different parts of the state, the University became one of the sites of the tragic violence. Mobs gathered outside the University gate and started shouting slogans of hate and racism. They breached the University gate and charged towards the hostels within no time. All hell was about to break loose.

The marauding mobs penetrated the gates (the main gate and another one located in the south) at around 7:30 p.m. They overpowered the security personnel and forced their way to the men's hostels. One of the insidious tricks they used was to coerce the students to show their identity cards (IDs) to ascertain their ethnicity. Five students were shoved and kept inside a room with their hands tied in one hostel. Others had to run helter-skelter inside the campus to escape the blood-baying mobs. They hid behind bushes and in ditches inside campus for cover. The prompt and swift response from the Assam Rifles stationed inside the campus saved the students from the clutches of the violent mobs. The students' fate would have differed dramatically without the Assam Rifles' timely

intervention. It is also essential to note that the campaign for removing the Assam Rifles inside the campus has been a consistent theme during MUSU (Manipur University Students Union) elections for decades in the University. With this new development, the voices for the removal will get louder. The nightmare didn't stop there. It continued unabated the whole night.

The miscreants, allegedly accompanied by some hostellers, proceeded towards their next target. This time, it was the women's hostels. It is hard to understand why this marauding mob was allowed to get inside women's hostels at a Central University without any resistance. Unfortunately, a campus meant to be a safe space for students became the theatre of violence. It seemed like they were given a free hand to wreak violence without any hindrance. They broke into their rooms and started systemically hunting for them one room after another. Video clips show how the ruthless rogues intimidated those inculpable girls inside the hostels. There were also attempts to hurt them physically. As many frightened girls hid under their beds and toilets, the miscreants broke their windowpanes and doors. In some heart-warming instances, they were sheltered and hidden by their good Samaritan friends belonging to different communities.

Such stories are few and far between, but they give

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humanity hope in such a dark time. They hid themselves and huddled together in some safe spaces they could find until they were evacuated from their respective places by the Assam Rifles. The evacuation process from the hostels to the AR camp was not a smooth rescue mission. The miscreants attempted to stop vehicles and asked the girls to be handed to them. Thankfully, the Assam Rifles put up a stiff resistance and successfully repelled them. The visceral hatred they experienced will leave a deep scar in their memory for a long time to come.

By dawn, the Assam Rifles had finally completed the evacuation process. More than one hundred forty people were evacuated and given shelter in the camp, including students, staff members, and their families. The Assam Rifles provided them with food and other basic needs. All the evacuees were discreetly transported to the 1st MR camp in Imphal, escorted by the Assam Rifles after some time.

The destruction of properties that belonged to the Kuki-Zo community students and staff members went unabated for the next two days, i.e., the 5th and 6th of May. The mob vigilantes were allowed to roam freely inside the campus as they went berserk in destroying hostel rooms and staff quarters. Properties, including laptops, clothes and others, were looted. Books, documents, thesis and study

materials were burnt to ashes inside the very campus, which should have valued these items as sacrosanct. It is hard to understand why these vigilante mobs were allowed to go on a rampage spree for two more days. Will the University authority not be held accountable for allowing such mayhem to continue? Does it not constitute a gross mishandling of the situation, thereby suggesting incompetence or complicity on the part of the authority? Where does the buck stop? A few days after the violence on the campus, it was shocking to find that the Dean of Students Welfare (DSW) was utterly dismissive of the incident on a news channel. It is sad to note that such an irresponsible statement was made by a person whose job was to ensure the welfare of the students in the University and which he thoroughly failed.

Nearly five months after these incidents, some misguided students instigated by miscreants again vandalized women's hostels recently. Their properties were damaged, looted and destroyed similarly. The immediate trigger was the surfacing of the viral photos of the two teenagers. This fresh episode of hate marks the complete ouster of the Kuki-Zo students from their hostels and the University. With many of them displaced in relief camps, unable to return to their homes and villages, the sudden disruption of their education at the University is the last straw that has shattered their hopes.



War is evil, but it is often the lesser evil.

- George Orwell



OPINION**Manipur Hills and Valley: Ages of Living Together Separately**

Despite tall claim of the oneness of hills-valley, historical records are silent that hills and valley of Manipur are one, the idea of hills valley brotherhood is a recent origin. The hollow chant of Ching-tam amadani (oneness of hills and valley), Ching-tam machin manao (hills-valley brotherhood) should be stopped. No history can be based on the 'invented truth'. Emotionally, the hills and valley had departed long time ago; today it is only the political boundary which forcefully binds them together. Manipur which lies at the cross road between South East Asia and Central Asia provided a suitable habitat for many seeking for better places. Different racial and ethnic groups of people passed through this vast virgin tract of land in the distant past. This process of migration continued even in the 19th century with the coming of some ethnic tribal groups. Gradually, numerous cultural groups with distinct identity developed and began to occupy different areas, both in the valley and hills of today's Manipur.

As the society progressed, absorption and the assimilation of the weaker groups by the superior took place, and in the course of time numerous clans of varying size and strength developed in the valley. In 15th century, the different social groups who inhabit the valley were amalgamated into single group under the suzerainty of Ningthoujas after a long period of inter-clan conflicts among the clan principalities of Manipur valley. This process of Meitei state formation left out the inhabitants of today's hills people of Manipur. Perhaps, this is the first point of departure of hills and valley which left an everlasting hills-valley divide in the state of Manipur. While the valley dweller has formed strong Meitei community, the hills people couldn't expand

beyond their village republic because of unfavourable environmental circumstances. In the hills; each village republic occupies specific areas which never overlapped with the territory of the next village.

Even after the consolidation of power by the Ningthaojas in the 15th century, the political as well as geographical boundary of Meitei kingdom ebbed and flowed, depending upon the personality of the existing rulers. The royal chronicle, Cheitharol Kumbaba referred that the kingdom during the period 1467-1501 A.D (ruled by king Kyamba, he introduced the keeping of royal chronicle known as Cheitharol Kumbaba) extends beyond the valley. During the reign of king Khangemba (1597-1652), who was believed to be the most illustrious ruler of medieval Manipur, the boundary extended from the Barak to Chindwin from Maram hills and to Tipaimukh. During the rule of the weak and unpopular rulers, the boundary was confined to valley alone. In most cases, the control of the hills was always short lived and had to be frequently asserted by frequent military expeditions.

Another historical landmark which created a cleavage between the hills and valley of Manipur was the conversion of the Meitei into Vaishnavite Hinduism in the 18th century. The Meitei society which was caste-less declared themselves as Kshatriya of the Hindu caste hierarchy with their conversion to Hinduism. Non Hindu hills people were looked down as a people outside the caste or considered untouchables. Social and cultural

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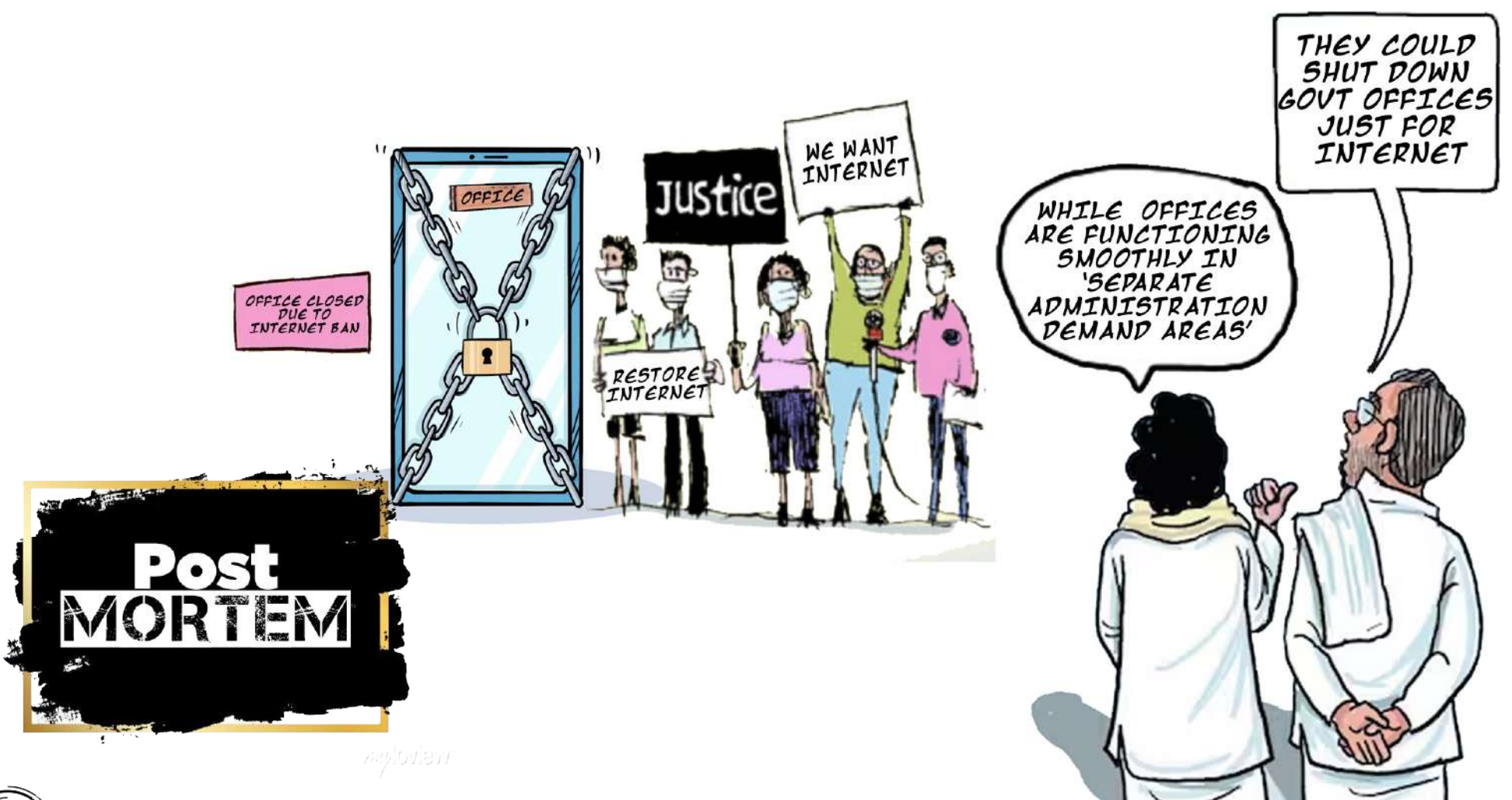
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barriers created due to caste difference and invariably, food habits. The people from the hills were considered as impure or polluted people, while the valley people as pure or twice-born. With this conversion, deliberate Sankritization took place among the valley people. The Meitei which was linguistically and ethnically a Tibeto Burman made an attempt to give a new identity, as a result, the royal family began to trace their genealogy to the Arjuna of the Mahabharata claiming Aryan origin. In 1724, the state adopted a Sanskrit name, Manipur (the Abode of Jewels). Since then, the Meitei kingdom is known as Manipur. The hills came under the indirect control of British Political Agent only after 1891. Prior to 1891, the hills were never formed as part of the Manipur kingdom. In 1907, government was handed over to Raja Churachand Singh, and he was made the President of Manipur State Durbar. However, it was reorganised in 1913, and the Raja ceased to be the President. The authority and jurisdiction of Raja and his court was confined to the valley only, the hills continued to be looked after by the Political Agent.

On the eve of British leaving India, the hills people, both the Kukis and the Nagas took a common stand; they refused to be merged with the Manipur state. Kukis under their chiefs and Kuki National Assembly along with the Nagas expressed strong refusal to be part of Manipur.

Among the Nagas, under the strong leadership of Athikho Daiho Mao under the banner of Naga National League representing the Nagas of Manipur strongly opposed the merger with the Manipur state. The symbolic expression of No house tax payment to the Manipur state was launched; subsequently, Athikho Daiho and N Modoli were arrested and imprisoned in Calcutta Dum Dum Central jail. Protest against the arrest of their leader was resorted to with brute force by the Assam Rifles killing three persons and injuring many people. The people of Manipur have been living together without sense of oneness for centuries, without appreciating, without consulting one another. Hills and valley do not share a common hero, or role model. The historical heroes of one community, for example, is irrelevant for the other community; the prominent patriots of Manipur such as Senapati Tikendrajit, Thangal General etc. are not more than a historical figure for many hills people. They have no common cause; hills and valley have never fought together for any cause in the entire course of their history. Hence, ching-tam amadani or ching-tam machin manao is an imaginary relationship, which does not exist in reality!

Tuisem Ngakang is a researcher based in Delhi. The author may be reached at tuisem.ngakang@gmail.com



THE ROOT THAT DEFINES WHO I AM

*Yes! I may be brought up in towns or cities.
Or sometimes miles away from it.
But I have never forgotten my root
The root that defines who I am.*

*Mountain and hills covered with green grasses and trees
Fresh water flowing from its peak down the base with birds chirping sweetly.
Centenarian forefathers who were very brave and courageous.
This I say is my root.*

*Wise men says “a little spark can ignite a massive fire”.
Well this little nation of mine isn't any different
Because there is a little spark that exists and burn within us.
With our Almighty father we will ignite and burn together invincible*

*This I say is my root
The root that defines who I am .*

-Lily Kipgen

