

# Thingkho *Le* Malcha

A Daily Newsletter by KSO Media & Documentation Cell



## AWAITING JUSTICE



### LUNMINSANG HAOKIP (25 YEARS)

S/O THANGJANG HAOKIP

ADDRESS: EKOUL MULAM, SADAR HILLS

DATE OF DEATH: 28<sup>TH</sup> MAY, 2023

PLACE OF DEATH: PURUM LIKLI

CAUSE OF DEATH: MURDERED BY MEITEI MILITANTS



## KUKI VICTIMS' UPDATE

As on 22.07.2024



**191**  
DEATHS



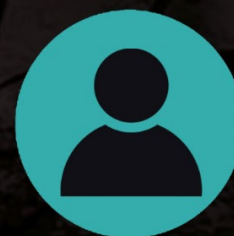
**200+**  
VILLAGES BURNT



**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-ZO REMEMBRANCE DAY SPARKS PROTESTS AGAINST WITHDRAWAL OF ASSAM RIFLES

The 15th Remembrance Day of the Kuki-Zo community was marked by a massive demonstration and solemn ceremonies aimed at drawing attention to the precarious security situation in the region. The event underscored the community's deep concerns about the proposed withdrawal of the Assam Rifles and its potential consequences for regional stability.

Thousands of Kuki-Zo people gathered in Sadar Hills at Gamgiphai, showcasing a significant turnout from across the region. The protest included a 1 km long rally that began at Gamgiphai, proceeded to Charhajare, and then returned to Gamgiphai.

The rally demanded the government reverse its decision to withdraw the Assam Rifles from the region. The Kuki-Zo community emphasized that the presence of this paramilitary force is crucial for maintaining peace and protecting them from ethnic violence.

The day concluded with a solemn ceremony honoring those Kuki-Zo who have lost their lives in the ongoing ethnic conflicts in Manipur.

On the sideline of the event, CoTU's Spokesperson Ng. Lun Kipgen said that their 15th Remembrance Day, today was marked with uncertainty, trepidation, and fear, as the Home Minister has resolved to remove the Assam Rifle from the Kuki-Zo-dominated areas.

He said that the recent decision to withdraw the Assam Rifles from Kuki-Zo dominated areas casts a shadow of uncertainty and fear among the local communities highlighting the pivotal role played by the Assam Rifles in maintaining peace and neutrality amid ongoing conflicts in the region since last year.

"The Assam Rifles have been instrumental in safeguarding both Kuki-Zo and Meitei communities during these tumultuous times," said Kipgen. "They have assisted in the safe evacuation of the Kuki-Zo people from Imphal to the Hill Districts and have ensured the safety of Meitei communities from the Hills to the valley as well."



Kipgen then questioned the rationale behind the decision to replace the Assam Rifles, asking the Prime Minister and the Union Home Minister, "How is it that your own force, which has maintained stability and neutrality, is being punished? Instead, plans are underway to impose other forces in the Kuki-Zo-dominated areas."

The CoTU spokesperson stressed that their objection is not against the deployment of other central forces but against the perceived political influence exerted by the current Chief Minister of Manipur over the decision-making process.

"We urge the Prime Minister and the Union Home Minister to reconsider this decision for the sake of stability and lasting peace in the region," Kipgen added.

The Committee on Tribal Unity, CoTU also vowed to resort to an extreme form of agitations if the decision for removal of the Assam Rifles - Friends of the Hills People - from the region is not reconsidered.

They emphasized that the withdrawal could potentially destabilize the area and jeopardize the ongoing peace efforts.

A complete total shutdown was imposed across Sadar Hills Kangpokpi District today. However, vehicular movement along the National Highway was exempted from the purview of the total shutdown.

# ZO UNITED RAISES CONCERN OVER POTENTIAL REPLACEMENT OF ASSAM RIFLES IN MANIPUR

The Zo United, a coalition of Kuki community organizations, has submitted a memorandum to the Prime Minister expressing deep concern over plans to replace the Assam Rifles units in Manipur with the Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF). The group emphasizes that the Assam Rifles, with its extensive experience and understanding of local dynamics, has been crucial in maintaining a fragile ceasefire in the region.

The Assam Rifles has been stationed in sensitive areas such as Kangvai-Gothol and Kangpokpi for over a year, playing a pivotal role in preventing the escalation of violence amidst ongoing conflict between the Meiteis and Kuki tribals. The Zo United argues that replacing the experienced Assam Rifles with the CRPF could jeopardize the fragile peace, given the CRPF's lack of familiarity with the region and its recent controversies involving allegations of bias.

The Zo United also highlights concerns about the neutrality of the CRPF's Deputy Inspector General, Huidrom Premjit, who belongs to the Meitei community and has faced accusations of partiality during recent flare-ups of violence. They argue that such a replacement could lead to increased tensions and violence, disrupting the ceasefire and undermining the efforts to bring about a lasting resolution to the conflict.

The Zo United stresses that the Assam Rifles has shown professionalism and commitment in challenging circumstances, including incidents where they successfully prevented escalations despite facing false accusations and intense scrutiny. "With the buffer zones always on tenterhooks, any misunderstanding or attempt by one side to provoke the other could result in a fresh bout of violence without intervention from an experienced hand. When should central forces come down hard on the warring parties? When should they try and pacify the locals? Who are the leaders and the main players in a particular area when you need to de-escalate a situation? The Assam Rifles are familiar with all



these questions because of the years they have spent in the region," the Zo United maintained. On several occasions in the past year, the Assam Rifles has prevented many deaths by steadfastly performing its duty even at the cost of being subjected to wrongful propaganda.

For instance, in August last year, Meitei police commandos from Bishnupur district tried to cross the military buffer zone into Churachandpur district, but an Assam Rifles vehicle blocked the road, leading to a heated altercation which was captured on video and which led to protests by the Meitei community. The Zo United further maintained that the Assam Rifles was just performing its duty amidst threats and intimidation by the partisan state commandos. If it had allowed Meitei policemen or Kuki-Zo policemen to cross the buffer zone on either side and shoot at people on the other side, there would have been a huge escalation in violence. Many civilians on both sides - Meiteis and tribals - would end up dead in the ensuing gunfight. The violence would almost be uncontrollable if policemen were allowed to cross the buffer zone. Also, militant groups like Arambai Tenggol often wear military fatigues while carrying automatic weapons, which makes it hard to distinguish them from the police.

In another instance, an Assam Rifles truck blocked the entrance to the Sugnu police station on June 2, 2023 because Meitei policemen had been openly

*Contd.*

*Contd.*

supporting Meitei mobs in arson attacks on tribal houses and villages in the preceding days. Videos of the incident led to false accusations against the Assam Rifles. In Sugnu town, which hitherto had a mixed population of tribals and Meiteis, all Kuki-Zo tribals were driven out. Ariel videos taken by civilian drones clearly show police gypsies leading Meitei mobs in Sugnu as they set tribal homes ablaze. Dozens of tribal villages surrounding the town were also burnt down, with all the Kuki tribals fleeing to Lamka town.

Incidents like these led to the Assam Rifles being falsely accused of favouring one community, despite the professionalism and pragmatism it has shown throughout the conflict. As per the Zo United, the main points to ponder are -

1) Is it a good idea to remove a proven and experienced force like the Assam Rifles, which is already familiar with the region, and replace it with another force at this crucial time?

2) Why should a partisan community which is directly involved in the conflict dictate the deployment of central security forces?

3) If the Assam Rifles needs to be probed in the above-mentioned cases and others, shouldn't the central government follow due procedure and launch an investigation against the particular personnel involved? Removing an entire regiment to pacify one community will create a very bad precedent.

---

## SELOITHA BRIDGE NOT UNDER THE PURVIEW OF RADICALISED MEITEIS' GOVERNMENT, SAYS KUKI INPI

In sharp response to the Meitei Chief Minister, N. Biren Singh's bold exclamation to destroy Seloitha Bridge, being built by the Kuki community at K. Molnom under Chandel district, the Kuki Inpi Manipur has said that the bridge has no connection to or bearing on the interests of the Meiteis, nor does it fall under the purview of the radicalised Manipur State Government's decision-making authority.

Kuki Inpi, the apex body of Kuki Tribes, was appalled by the recent statements made by the Manipur State Government concerning the Seloitha Bridge and the bold exclamation to dismantle the bridge citing claims that are at most ironic and incongruous against the backdrop of the state-sponsored ethnic cleansing campaign against the Kuki-Zo people.

In a statement issued on Saturday, the Kuki Inpi's Information and Publicity Secretary, Janghaolun Haokip said the pre-planned ethnic cleansing against the Kuki-Zo people and the numerous injustices perpetrated against them is the hand of the Manipur state government under Biren Singh, and therefore the Kuki-Zo people stands resolute that a Separate



Administration is the only solution to the ongoing tension in the Manipur region and anything otherwise will only aggravate existing tensions.

"The Kuki-Zo community has the exclusive right to make decisions concerning our land and people, and such decisions should not be subject to the arbitrary actions of the Manipur State Government who had driven the Kuki-Zo people out of our homes and land in the valley," he said, alleging that the Manipur government had conspired with the Meiteis in the massacre and continues aggressions against the Kuki people and their land.

# KUKI MLAS URGE PM TO RETAIN ASSAM RIFLES IN MANIPUR; KWOHR CRITICIZES DECISION TO REMOVE ASSAM RIFLES

In a formal appeal, the ten Kuki MLAs have called on the Prime Minister to intervene regarding a plan to withdraw the 9th and 22nd Battalions of the Assam Rifles from their crucial deployments in Kangvai and Kangpokpi. The MLAs claim that this decision, influenced by elements within the state government with perceived biases, risks undermining the current peace efforts in the region.

The MLAs argue that the Assam Rifles has been instrumental in preventing further violence and maintaining order in sensitive areas. They highlight the force's neutral stance and effectiveness in managing tensions between the Meitei and Kuki-Zo communities.

The appeal suggests that replacing the Assam Rifles with the Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF) could be part of a broader agenda to facilitate ethnic cleansing of the Kuki community by Meitei majoritarian elements. They stress the importance of retaining the Assam Rifles to preserve the delicate status quo in buffer zones and urge that if a change in deployment is necessary, it should involve other battalions of the Assam Rifles rather than the CRPF.

The MLAs seek the Prime Minister's intervention to address their concerns and ensure that any decision regarding troop deployment is made with fairness and in the best interest of maintaining peace and justice in Manipur. Meanwhile, the Kuki Women Organization for Human Rights (KWOHR) has expressed serious concerns over the recent decision to remove the Assam Rifles (AR) from their posts, alleging that it is based on unsubstantiated claims of partiality towards the Kuki community. The organization denounces the decision as ironic and troubling, asserting that it exacerbates existing grievances and reinforces the marginalization of the Kuki people.

KWOHR argues that the withdrawal of the Assam Rifles, driven by pressures from majority communities,

MEMORANDUM SUBMITTED TO SHRI NARENDRA MODI, HON'BLE PRIME MINISTER OF INDIA BY THE 10-KUKI-ZOMI-HMAR MEMBERS OF MANIPUR LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY (MLAs) ON THE 2nd AUGUST 2024, ON CENTRAL GOVERNMENT DECISION TO WITHDRAW THE 9th AND 22nd BATTALIONS, ASSAM RIFLES (AR) BY REPLACING WITH CENTRAL RESERVE POLICE FORCE (CRPF)


Hon'ble Sir,


We, the 10-Kuki-Zomi-Hmar MLAs would like to draw your kind attention to the matter highlighted above while fervently requesting your benign intervention;

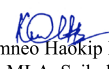
1. That, we have come to learn that there is a plan to withdraw 9th Bn and 22nd Battalion of the Assam Rifles from their current sensitive deployment at Kangvai and Kangpokpi, following pressure from the communally biased elements in the State Government who leave no stone unturned to portray the AR in a bad light just for the simple reason that the AR stood tall to serve as perhaps the finest neutral force so far.
  2. That, it is pertinent to cite that the un-biased service of the Assam Rifles in the fringe areas has been obviously instrumental in prevention of further escalation of violence till date. The role played by AR so far in maintenance of Law and Order is absolutely neutral.
  3. This unwholesome decision to replace the aforementioned AR Battalions with CRPF at this critical juncture is nothing but a sinister design to expedite the Meitei majoritarian ethnic cleansing campaign against the Kuki-Zo community.
  4. To maintain the current status-quo particularly in the Buffer-Zones separating the Meitei and Kuki-Zo communities, the undaunted and unbiased presence of the Assam Rifles is highly indispensable at this stage.
  5. Under the prevailing circumstances, in any eventuality of the 9th and 22nd Bn. AR to be shifted out specifically, it is vehemently appealed that they may be replaced by other Battalions of the Assam Rifles.
- Hence, in all fairness of things, we earnestly request your intervention for either withdrawal or rectification of the decision in the best interest of justice.

Yours Sincerely


  
1. Haokholet Kipgen  
MLA, Saitu AC


  
4. Ngursanglur Sanate  
MLA, Tipaimukh AC


  
7. Chinlunthang  
MLA, Singngat AC


  
2. Kimneo Haokip Hangshing  
MLA, Saikul AC


  
5. Letpao Haokip  
MLA, Tengnoupal AC

  
8. Paolental Haokip  
MLA, Saikot AC

  
3. LM Khaufe  
MLA, Churachandpur AC

  
6. Letzamang Haokip  
MLA, Henglep AC

  
9. Nemcha Kipgen  
MLA, Kangpokpi AC

  
10. Vungzagin Valte  
MLA, Thanlon AC

unfairly targets the Kuki people and undermines their rights. The organization criticizes the decision as being influenced by long-standing biases rather than factual evidence. They assert that the move disregards the Kukis' concerns and ignores the AR's role in maintaining stability in the region.

In their statement, KWOHR emphasizes that the essence of democracy involves protecting minority rights and preventing the tyranny of the majority.

*Contd.*

Contd.

They accuse the government of caving to demands from the Coordinating Committee on Manipur Integrity (COCOMI) without proper consultation with the Kuki community, thereby violating democratic principles of equality and representation.

The KWOHR calls on the Indian government to uphold democratic values by ensuring that minority communities like the Kukis have their voices heard and their rights protected. They urge the government to reconsider the decision and to support the Assam Rifles, which they believe has been crucial in managing the buffer zones and maintaining peace in the conflict-affected areas.

In a democracy, the majority's power must be balanced by the protection of minority rights. The essence of democracy lies not only in reflecting the will of the

majority but also in safeguarding against the tyranny of the majority. The government's acceptance of demands from the Coordinating Committee on Manipur Integrity (COCOMI) without proper consultation with the hill people effectively silences their voice and violates the principle of equality.

The Kuki Women Organisation for Human Rights (KWOHR) calls on the Government of India to uphold the principles of democracy and ensure that the voices of minority communities like the Kukis are not suppressed. The government must guarantee that all citizens have equal access to their rights, resources, and opportunities, regardless of the pressures from any dominant groups. And we believe in Assam Rifles who has been maintaining the buffer-zone ever since the violence broke out.



Greeshma Kuthar  
@jeegujja



Not too surprising that CM Biren Singh is once again trying to use the refugees fleeing from Myanmar as fodder to feed the violence in Manipur. But like I highlighted here, India as a QUAD country has said it is for 'humanitarian assistance' to Burmese



frontline.thehindu.com  
Myanmar Civil War Refugees in India: Escaping Junta Violence, Facing Humanitarian Crisis and...

13:54 · 03 Aug 24 · 843 Views



Sushant Singh  
@SushantSin

Follow

Why is it being done? Because Me  
Assam Rifles is a force that opera  
is trusted and is now being pushed out. This will not  
augur well for Manipur. @vijaita reports

### CRPF to replace 2 battalions of Assam Rifles in Manipur; plea to review move

Vijaita Singh  
NEW DELHI

The Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF) is all set to replace two battalions of the Assam Rifles in the hill districts of Churachandpur and Kangpokpi in violence-hit Manipur, a government official told *The Hindu*.

Around 2,000 personnel of the oldest paramilitary force will be moved to the Jammu region.

Tribal groups have opposed the move. The Kuki Students' Organisation (KSO) said "Assam Rifles af-

ter years of effort and dedication won the hearts and minds of the hill people".

Ever since ethnic violence erupted in the State on May 3, 2023, the deployment of the Assam Rifles and State police in vulnerable areas has been a bone of contention between the tribal Kuki-Zo people and the Meitei community.

Meitei civil society groups and MLAs have said in many "sensitive areas", the Assam Rifles personnel are not responsive and remain mute spectators when unarmed civilians are fired

upon. In January, 34 MLAs passed a resolution stating, "These forces and their leadership (chain of command) need to give strict instructions and be held accountable and replaced with forces that have the ability to act by returning suppressive fire when they observe that unarmed civilians are being fired upon, to enable civilians to get to cover and safety."

The Kuki-Zo groups said the decision is against the will of the local population and the government needs to reconsider the move.

9:55 · 02 Aug 24 · 9,030 Views



Click to Follow

# MAJOR DRUG BUST: WOMAN FROM UKHRUL CAUGHT WITH DRUGS WORTH RS. 2.08 CRORE

In a significant crackdown on drug trafficking, a joint operation team from the Special Operation Team, 16 Assam Rifles, along with Mao Police Station, successfully intercepted a passenger service vehicle carrying a substantial quantity of suspected heroin near Martyr's Park, Mao. The operation took place approximately 2 kilometers south of Mao Police Station at around 3:00 pm today.

The joint team, which included lady constables and rifle women from the 16 Assam Rifles, conducted random frisking and checking of vehicles coming from the Senapati side towards Mao. During the inspection, a passenger service vehicle was flagged down. Upon a thorough search, the team discovered a suspicious carton box concealed under the seat.

The box, which was found to contain 26 soap cases filled with a powder suspected to be heroin, was claimed by Ningshen Wonring (43), wife of Ningshen Ninglum, from Awontang Kongleiram, Ukhrul South Sub-Division, Yairipok, Ukhrul, Manipur. She admitted to possessing the substance.

The ADM/MAO was immediately notified, and Executive Magistrate Shri Ningreingam Leisan (45) promptly arrived at the scene to oversee the procedures. In the presence of the Executive Magistrate, lady constable,



and rifle women, the carton box containing 26 transparent plastic packets of the suspected heroin powder was weighed, totaling 298 grams which costs Rs 2,08,60,000/- approximately in international market.

Additionally, a mobile phone (Redmi Note 5) with IMEI numbers 869781031001865 and 8697810310018873, an Airtel SIM card bearing number 8974352572, and an Aadhaar card belonging to Ningshen Wonring were seized. The seizure memo was prepared at 3:30 pm, and Ningshen Wonring was formally arrested at 3:50 pm, following all necessary legal formalities.

The arrested individual and the seized items have been handed over to the Officer-in-Charge of Mao Police Station for further legal action.



**I've observed that many people feel intimidated by our doctrine simply because we have an answer for everything.**

*-Bertolt Brecht*





FEATURED ARTICLE

## Is Crackdown on Smuggling Behind Anger Against Assam Rifles in Manipur?

Vishal Arora and Harshita Rathore

In the violence-afflicted state of Manipur in India's northeast, the Assam Rifles, a key central force, finds itself under intense scrutiny. It's at the centre of a vocal campaign that accuses it of taking sides in the ethnic conflict between the majority Meitei community and the Kuki-Zo tribal groups. However, this claim might just be a smokescreen to divert attention from what could be the real issue: the Assam Rifle's clampdown on rampant smuggling activities in the region, according to reliable sources in the security establishment Newsreel Asia has spoken with.

### Role of Assam Rifles in Manipur

With roughly 6,000 personnel deployed in Manipur's hinterland, which has been scene of ethnic violence for over a year, and another 6,000 along the India-Myanmar border, the Assam Rifles is a small part of the much larger Central Armed Police Forces (CAPF) presence in the state.

Despite the significant presence of about 25,000 personnel from other major security forces in the CAPF, like the Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF) and the Border Security Force (BSF) in Manipur, it is the Assam Rifles that has become a focal point of criticism. This force draws particular scrutiny from Meitei extremist groups, insurgents, local media and reportedly even some elements within the civil administration and various Meitei civil society groups.

The allegations against the Assam Rifles focus on purported biases in favour of the Kuki-Zo tribes, described derogatorily as "narco-terrorists" by their detractors, as well as its role in poppy cultivation. These accusations overlook the force's evacuation operations early in the conflict, including rescuing 10,000 Meiteis from Manipur's Churachandpur district despite Kuki-Zo resistance.

Despite being perceived as biased in managing the violence, Manipur's Chief Minister, Biren Singh, recently acknowledged that poppy cultivation had significantly decreased in the state following coordinated operations by the Assam Rifles, the state's Narcotics Control Bureau and the Army. Further, since the onset of the violence in May 2023, the force has recovered more than 800 weapons in the Kuki-Zo hill areas and nearly 450 in the Meitei-dominant valley areas, while also destroying 51 bunkers in the valley and 77 in the hills.

The Assam Rifles, although overseen by the Union Ministry of Home Affairs, operates much like the Army for counter-insurgency and border security operations primarily in northeast India. This is largely because it is led by senior Army officers who are on deputation.

*Contd.*

Click to Follow



*Contd.*

While the Indian Army faces accusations of human rights violations in Kashmir, where it represents the Indian state against sections of the local population and groups, the situation in Manipur presents a different dynamic. Here, the Army and the Assam Rifles are operating amid the ethnic tensions between two groups. Their presence and involvement are crucial, given the state administration's apparently partisan approach.

The campaign against the Assam Rifles commenced roughly a month following the outbreak of ethnic violence. However, a closer look at the Assam Rifle's activities during this period reveals a pattern that suggests other motives at play, particularly related to its anti-smuggling efforts.

### **Crackdown on Smuggling**

From May 2023 to May 2024, the Assam Rifles intercepted contraband valued at about 10 billion rupees. Further, due to the force's intensive crackdown, an equal amount of contraband is now stranded across the border in Myanmar.

The term "contraband" refers to goods that are illegal to possess or transport. These can include drugs, weapons, stolen goods, counterfeit items and wildlife products, among others. But in Manipur, about 95% of these seized goods comprised areca nuts, sourced from neighbouring Myanmar and other Southeast Asian countries and smuggled through Manipur. The areca nut is transported in trucks, driven by locals and loaded to twice its capacity.

Areca nut, also known as supari and mostly used for paan and gutka, is not inherently contraband in India; it is legally grown and consumed within the country. However, its import is regulated under Indian customs and agricultural laws to prevent the entry of low-quality or disease-infested nuts that could affect local crops and market prices. Areca nut is smuggled into India to avoid import duties or because they do not meet the required standards for legal import. In such cases, areca nut is considered contraband if it is imported illegally.

Until recently, smugglers were primarily using Manipur's southeastern Moreh border region to import areca nuts into India. While eastern Manipur shares its border with Myanmar, the Indian state of Assam is situated to Manipur's west. Smugglers transport areca nuts from eastern Manipur to Assam, taking advantage of the fact that it is a locally grown crop in Assam. Apparently, no checks are in place to balance local production in Assam with the quantity of areca nuts transported out of that state. Consequently, all areca nuts shipped out of Assam are apparently assumed to be legal.

However, an increased deployment of Assam Rifles personnel in the Moreh region due to the ongoing violence has significantly hindered their ability to use this route for smuggling contraband. Further, the territory just across the Indian border is now under the control of Myanmarese militias opposing the junta, which is infamous for its oppressive tactics against its own people.

As a result, the smugglers began routing areca nut through Ukhrul district in Manipur's northeast, which also shares border with Myanmar. However, the Assam Rifles also managed to intercept smugglers' trucks in Ukhrul.

This crackdown has significant economic implications, disrupting a lucrative smuggling route that not only evades taxation but also possibly finances various illegal activities, including armed insurgency seeking a separate sovereign Manipur and buying of arms and ammunition by extremist groups for the ongoing ethnic violence.

The pattern of smuggling interceptions shows a marked increase in the months leading up to the peak of the ethnic conflict.

### **Role of Smuggling in Ethnic Violence**

In March 2023, the Assam Rifles intercepted areca nuts valued at least 930 million rupees, followed by at least 240 million rupees in April. However,

*Contd.*

*Contd.*

during the violent outbreaks in May 2023, only 70 million rupees worth of areca nuts were seized, with figures dropping further to 10 million in June and 40 million in July. The numbers surged again in December 2023, reaching 500 million rupees, followed by 900 million rupees in January 2024, 2.4 billion rupees in February, and nearly 2 billion in March. The decline thereafter can be attributed to a further intensified crackdown and possibly the rainy season, which typically disrupts smuggling activities in the region.

Smuggled goods seized by the Assam Rifles are typically handed over to the concerned District Forest Officer (DFO) and subsequently to the local police. However, the final outcomes of these cases, including details about the individuals involved, are seldom disclosed to the public. This lack of transparency fuels ongoing rumours about the involvement of local political figures and law enforcement officials in the smuggling operations. One wonders why these rumours haven't been dispelled by the police and the state civil administration through the identification and disclosure of individuals involved in smuggling.

Moreover, the economic model of smuggling in Manipur extends beyond merely dodging state levies and its impact on local farmers; it also involves the smugglers paying "taxes" to armed groups that control various territories used for transporting smuggled goods. These armed groups, possessing sophisticated weapons and expensive ammunition in much higher quantities than those looted from state armouries, are leading the ongoing ethnic violence. They perhaps depend on this income to sustain their operations. Security forces report that these groups use ammunition liberally, suggesting an ample supply.

### **Human Cost of Violence**

It's not just about the state's revenue; the influx of money into Manipur is likely contributing to the unrest that has persisted for 15 months. After all, the actual scale of smuggling could far exceed the 10 billion rupees worth of areca nuts confiscated on the Indian side of

the border and an equal amount still lying across the border in Myanmar.

The unrest in Manipur escalated following an April 2023 directive from the Manipur High Court, which hinted at granting tribal status to the majority Meitei community. This status would enable them to purchase land in the hills, traditionally inhabited by the Kuki-Zo tribes, sparking fears among the Kuki-Zo of losing their ancestral lands.

The region's valuable natural resources, including oil, have drawn government and corporate interest, further inflaming the situation by altering land laws and displacing tribal families.

The violence has led to considerable displacement and loss of life. Since May 3, 2023, around 67,000 people have been displaced, and 191 Kuki-Zo fatalities have been reported. Although Meiteis have also suffered tremendously, Meitei groups have not disclosed the number of fatalities and casualties.

There is now almost complete ethnic segregation, with Kuki-Zo families moving out of the Imphal area and Meiteis leaving Kuki-dominated regions.

While claims of ethnic bias provide a convenient rallying cry, the evidence strongly indicates that the real grievance against the Assam Rifles stems from its substantial disruptions to a deeply entrenched smuggling economy. This economy not only supports local criminal elements but also likely finances the ongoing armed insurgency and ethnic violence. Consequently, the Assam Rifles' success in curbing smuggling is directly linked to the intensified campaign against its presence in Manipur.

Published by [Newsreel Asia](#)

## TODAY IN HISTORY/EVENTS RECALLED: AUGUST 03, 2023

### A RECAP OF THE HORRIFIC INCIDENTS ON AUGUST 03, 2023 AS A RESULT OF PRE-PLANNED STATE-SPONSORED ETHNIC CLEANSING POGROM AGAINST KUKI-ZO

A combined team comprising Manipur state forces and Arambai Tenggol initiated an attack on Tangnuam village in Leimakhong, Kangpokpi district. The attack took place from approximately 4:30 AM to 1:00 PM. In a tragic turn of events, to highlight the involvement of state forces, one personnel from the 6th Manipur Rifles, identified as Tourangbam Rishikumar, lost his life during the attack.

Unfortunately, it has been reported that Meiteis' media outlets have shamelessly characterized the incident as an attack launched by the Kukis. Importantly, as of the latest information, no casualties have been reported on your side.

Manipur Police Commandos and Arambai Tenggol jointly launched an attack on Molngat and P Gelinmol. This assault included the use of mortars. The village volunteers bravely retaliated, successfully preventing the attackers from entering the village. The exchange of fire continued throughout the night. No casualties have been reported.

A significant gathering of Meira Paibis occurred in Tronglaobi, Kwakta, and Phoughakchao, with plans to march to Haolai Khopi, the burial site for Kuki-Zo martyrs. They were accompanied by Manipur Police Commandos, who opened fire when central forces attempted to prevent the Meira Paibis from entering Kangvai.

This situation resulted in an exchange of fire between security forces and Manipur Police Commandos, indicating the intensity and volatility of the confrontation.



In a troubling series of incidents, it has been reported that around 300 arms were looted from various sources, including the 2nd IRB, Naranseina, Keirenphabi Police Outpost, and Thangalawai Police Outpost in Bishnupur district.

Additionally, another mob reportedly launched an attack on several security and police facilities, including the 7th Battalion of Manipur Rifles, the 2nd Battalion of Manipur Rifles, Heingang Police Station, and Singjamei Police Station in Imphal.

FEATURED ARTICLE

THE ROLE OF  
**N. BIREN SINGH**

IN THE ETHNIC-CLEANSING POGROM AGAINST THE KUKIS

PART-4

AN EXCERPT FROM **THE INDELIBLE TRAUMA**

Contd. from 2<sup>nd</sup> August, 2024 Issue of *Thingkho le Malcha*



**13. Overt support of ST demand-** On March 4, 2019 Biren said in the floor of the assembly that the Meetei/Meiteis demand for ST status is genuine and his government will take steps to accomplish it. The same was reiterated by Leishemba Sanjaoba, MP Rajya Sabha at the floor of the house on 5th April, 2022 demanding for the inclusion of the Meetei/Meitei community into the ST list. The sentiment of the tribals was thrown to the wind.

**14. Divide and rule policy over the tribals-** If the Meiteis are to maintain their hegemony or supremacy in the state of Manipur the only weapon they have is to divide the tribals on Naga and Kuki line. Meiteis dreaded a united tribal the most because it was something insurmountable for them. So to divide them on community lines was important. It was important for the Meiteis to capitalize on the differences of the tribals interse. Though both the Naga's and Kuki's belong to the tribal group, professed Christianity as their religion and tenuously bound by their common hatred for the Meiteis but they have different political aspirations which play as an irritant in their relationship. The Meiteis tend to capitalize on this and also used jobs, sops, development works, economic package and largesse as inducement to draw one of the two group closer to them. It doesn't matter whether they

are Nagas or Kukis. The poor and impecunious tribals and their leadership have invariably step into this pitfall laid down. While one was pampered the other was sidelined. And so, we remain poor, impecunious and divided. Shrewd Meitei!

**15. Counter-blockade by Meitei Leepun on May 2 and 3-** In order to exact his revenge for the humiliation that he had faced from the people of Churachandpur district on the 28th of April, 2023, where he was forced to cancelled an already scheduled program N Biren Singh and his cronies were always on the lookout for an opportunity to settle scores. The ember of K Songjang village eviction was still red hot and everyone knew it was orchestrated by none other than N Biren Singh. The once popular CM became an object of hate and his image tarnished. The ATSUM solidarity rally provided the pretext. Meitei Leepun was chosen to do the dirty job. On the 2nd of May Meitei Leepun instigated the Meitei public with a fake propaganda that the tribals were launching economic blockade on the Meiteis so it was the duty of the meiteis to launch a counter blockade.

*Contd.*

Contd.

**16. Counter blockade** was launched in many places across Imphal valley but only the Kuki-Zos were targeted. The Nagas were spared of the pain. The Kukis people travelling to and fro were stopped, interdicted, pull down or forced to return.

**17. Concealing of UNLF surrenderees-** There were reports that around 200 United National Liberation Front had surrendered to the government of Manipur in the early part of 2023 but the matter was never reported to the press. They were secretly kept at an undisclosed location. The state government normally organized home coming ceremony for surrendered militants by giving them grand reception in the presence of media and state officials but this was not done for dubious reason. It was said that the surrendered UNLF militants were later used for burning of Kuki-Zo villages in Sugnu area and Chandel district.

**18. Violence of such scale, intensity and swiftness could not have occurred without state support-**

The scale, intensity and swiftness of the violence in Imphal valley and its periphery could not be done without the support of the state government and the police department. On the 3rd and 4th of May alone most of the localities of the Kuki-Zos in Imphal were either razed down or demolished beyond redemption. In two days alone more than 30 villages located in periphery of Imphal valley were burnt down. The swiftness and scale of the destruction in different hill districts demonstrated that there was military-like preparation carried out with precision. Thousands of armed volunteers were transported from Imphal capital in hundreds of vehicles. This could not have been possible without the support of the state government and Meitei officers in the police department.



**THE WOLF IN  
BIREN'S  
CLOTHING**





## A PRAYER FOR THE SAFETY OF MY VILLAGE FROM WOLVES AND FOXES

"Oh God, our refuge and strength, we pray to You,  
For the safety of our village, anew,  
Situated in the buffer zone, vulnerable and weak,  
Protect us from the valley's wolves and foxes, and the Meitei's cruel seek.

Watch over my villagers, church members, relatives, and dear ones,  
Keep them safe from atrocities, and the enemy's evil done.  
Shelter them under Your wings, like a mother hen her brood,  
And keep them from the snare, of the foxes' destructive mood.

Oh God, our Father, be our shield and defense,  
Protect us from the evil, that seeks to make offense,  
Give us peace in our homes, and calm in our streets,  
And may Your presence, be our comfort, and our retreat.

I pray for Your angels, to guard us day and night,  
And keep us from the Meitei's, cruel and bloody sight,  
May Your love and grace, surround us like a wall,  
And may Your justice, be our defense, standing tall.

Oh God, hear my prayers,  
And answer my plea,  
For the safety of my village and its vicinity,  
And its people, I beseech Thee, Lord  
May Your mercy and grace,  
Be our guiding light,  
And may Your protection, be our safety, day and night.

I do offer this prayer in the mighty name of our Lord and Saviour Jesus  
Christ. Amen.

**LETGUNLEN LHUNGDIM, G. SONGGEL**