

Thingkho Le Malcha

A Daily Newsletter by KSO Media & Documentation Cell



DM Veng BBC Church RELIEF CENTRE

DM Veng, Lamka

Managed by
Kuki Khanglai Lawmpi
General Headquarters(KKL-GHQ)

Total Inmates Registered: 173*

Male: 88

Female: 85

*As on 28th July, 2023



KUKI VICTIMS' UPDATE

As on 16.12.2023



158
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.

MOREH VIOLENCE IS THE DEVIL HAND OF MEITEI GOVERNMENT, SAYS VILLAGE VOLUNTEERS; ALLEGE NO STATE FORCE IN MOREH BUT MEITEI MILITANTS

The Tengenoupal District Village Volunteers have said that there are no State forces in Moreh but a combined force of Meiteis' private militia group of Arambai Tenggol and surrendered Meitei militants masquerading as Police Commandos.

Asserting that the violence which occurred in Moreh was a result of the devil hand of the Meitei Government, the Village Volunteers clarified that there were no instances of gunfight between government security forces and Kuki militants in Moreh town till today except the recent gun battles between Village guards and Meitei militia groups of Arambai Tenggol and surrendered Meitei militants who masqueraded as Police Commandos.

In a statement issued on Thursday, the Village Volunteers alleged that a gunfight broke out after the joint forces of Arambai Tenggol and Meitei militants burnt down Kuki houses in Lhangnom Veng, Moreh, Ward No. 9, and another gunfight broke out after those fake commandos tried to burn down Chavangphai, Canan Veng and Zion veng.

"It is well known to all that Arambai Tenggol and surrendered Meitei militants masqueraded as police commandos are stationed in the name of police commandos at Moreh town," the Volunteers said.

They also alleged that the Meiteis who were once residents of Moreh town are also seen masquerading as police commandos in Moreh town. Before the communal crisis, they were just shopkeepers, butchers, private water suppliers, ex-VDF (village defence force), civil police (who has connection with Meitei terrorists) and sympathisers of Myanmar-based Meitei militants and CSOs leaders. Ridiculously, they were led by police officers with criminal records. There are a handful of state police personnel so as to conceal stationing of Meitei militia groups, the volunteers stated.

They said, "To conceal the evil design of the Meitei government, N. Biren Singh says involvement of 'foreign hand' in Moreh incidents. In fact, there is an evil hand of the Meitei government in escalating violence in the Kuki-Zo area - Moreh."

The Tengenoupal District Village Volunteers also said they were surprised to learn how the state police officer had to demand more ammunitions for use by the Arambai Tenggol and Meitei militants in Moreh town. The so-called state Meitei police officer Krishna Tombi Singh had sent a letter to ADGP (LO) for issuance of large amounts of ammunitions in Moreh town, including 10,000 nos. of 7.62 LMG live rounds; 20,000 nos. of Insas live rounds; 17,000 nos. of AK-47 live rounds; 150 nos. of 51 Motar live rounds (H.E. bomb) and 3000 nos. of .303 rifle live rounds.

In fact, the Village Volunteers said, those demanded ammunitions are to be used by Arambai Tenggol and surrendered Meitei militants who are masqueraded as police commandos.

Alleging that Krishna Tombi Singh @ KT Singh, while he was an Addl. SP (Ops) in Tengenoupal district, had been involved in criminal activities including drug trafficking, the Village Volunteers noted that there were several instances of Police and Assam Rifles apprehending police Commandos under the command of KT Singh with consignment of drugs and other illegal items.

The Village Volunteers further said that since the outbreak of communal violence between Meitei and Kuki-Zo, the Centre government had already defined buffer zones between the hills and valley so as to bring back normalcy. "Deploying Meitei commandos and Meitei militia groups in Kuki-Zo area of Moreh by bypassing the buffer zone is nothing but an evil design to provoke and to escalate violence in already peaceful areas," the statement added.

Maintaining that violence would continue as long as there were Meitei forces in Kuki-Zo areas, the Village Volunteers (Eastern Zone) vowed that they would defend Kuki-Zo ancestral land of Moreh from those evil forces who tried to annihilate the people of Moreh and Tengenoupal District.

KUKI-ZO TOP TRIBAL BODY OF KANGGUI URGES UHM TO HALT ISSUANCE OF ADDITIONAL ARMS AND AMMO TO RADICALIZED MEITEI POLICE

The Kuki-Zo top tribal body of Kangpokpi chapter, the Committee on Tribal Unity, or the CoTU, Sadar Hills apprised the Union Home Minister of the prevailing situation of Manipur urging him to intervene to halt the issuance of additional arms and ammunition to the radicalized Meitei police personnel.

CoTU's seeking the Union Home Minister's intervention came after an MPS officer, in-charge of a Special Commando Unit wrote to the Additional Director General of Police (Law & Order) requesting the requisition of additional ammunition given the prevailing law and order.

Manipur police officer, Th. Krishnatombi Singh, MPS, who is also in-charge of a Special Commando Unit, in his letter to the ADGP (L/O), Manipur on December 30 listed the following ammunition for requisition.

- 1) 10,000 nos. of 7.62 LMG live rounds;
- 2) 20,000 nos. of INSAS live rounds;
- 3) 17,000 nos. of AK-47 live rounds.
- 4) 150 nos. of 51 Mortar live rounds (H.E. bomb), and
- 5) 3000 nos. of 303 live rounds.

Perturbed by the MPS officer's letter for requisition of additional ammunition, and considering the current situation and the alleged State police commandos' continuous atrocities on the innocent Kuki-Zo civilians, the Committee on Tribal Unity, Sadar Hills appeals to the ADGP (L/O) not to issue the requested ammunition since it poses a serious threat to the existence of the minority Kuki-Zo community.

CoTU also pointed out that it is an open secret that the Meitei police commandos have been at the forefront of attacks on Kuki-Zo villages and areas from the beginning of the current state-sponsored ethnic cleansing pogrom.

"If these ammunitions are issued, it will surely be shared with the radicalized Meitei militias such

as the Arambai Tenggol, Meitei Leepun, and the valley-based insurgent groups, to attack and kill fellow citizens", it added.

It further recalled that the majority of the 6000 advanced weapons and lakhs of rounds of ammunition seized from the armories of various police stations and Indian Reserve Battalions by radicalized Meitei militias in collusion with Meitei police are still at large.

It continued that unfortunately, the state administration has done little to retrieve the looted guns and ammunition, instead relying on the SP Railways, who is a Meitei, to obtain more ammunition.

"This is devoid of any logic unless it is meant to be used to further decimate the Kuki-Zo community", CoTU stated.

CoTU went on to say that there are already several videos and images confirming that Meitei militants are freely moving throughout the Imphal valley, armed with modern weaponry and clothed in police uniforms.

"To date, these armed Meitei militias have killed 156 Kuki-Zo in collusion with the Police Commandos, and providing more weapons would only serve to exacerbate the ongoing state-sponsored ethnic pogrom", it stated.

Drawing the attention of the Union Home Minister, Amit Shah for his immediate intervention, the CoTU urged the Union Home Minister to halt the process of issuing additional arms and ammunition to the radicalized Meitei police personnel and militias since it is also a threat to the security of the country.

MEITEI MISCREANTS TORCH ATLEAST 5 ABANDONED KUKIS HOUSES IN 'HIGH SECURITY ZONE' OF IMPHAL EVEN AFTER 8 MONTHS OF VIOLENCE

Despite the claims and allegations made by the Meiteis that there is no law and order in Kuki-Zo areas, a clear picture on complete failure of law and order in the valley has surfaced again on Thursday night wherein five abandoned houses belonging to Kuki-Zo community in New Lambulane was torched by Meitei miscreants.

Though the culprit behind the arsoning is yet to be ascertained, it is likely that the Meiteis and their media houses will surely report it as a result of short circuit.

This locality was once burned during the initial stage of the violence, prompting many to assert that living together with the Meiteis was not feasible anymore under any circumstances.

Despite the area being close to high security areas such as the Officers' Colony and Chief Minister's Bungalow, it is questionable as to how such incident has been allowed to happen again. Even the central security forces are also stationed at New Lambulane area since the outbreak of the violence.

Many of the Meitei social media users who were watching the live video told the video uploader to stop the live video. Some of them commented that the central forces who were guarding the area and the Kukis colluded and burnt the house by giving prior information to the national media.



This is not the first instance wherein abandoned houses of kuki zo have been torched. A few months back, houses belonging to Kuki-Zo communities in the same area were also torched. Even in the past incidents when the Kuki-Zo houses were torched in the same area, the Meiteis and even the media house were quick enough to claim or blame that the houses caught fire owing to short circuit.



Ratu Munda Talks
@Ratu_Talks

I do not know what's in the mind of the CM! Why he's rushed Commandos to Moreh when we already have Central Forces (Neutral) manning there? So far no incident had taken place. It is only after the CDO have gone there, violence is taking place again. ~ Sr Journalist Deepak Dewan

MANIPUR VIOLENCE: COMMISSION EXTENDS DEADLINE FOR PUBLIC TESTIMONIES

In response to the unprecedented violence and riots that occurred in the State of Manipur on May 3, 2023, the Commission of Inquiry (Manipur Violence), 2023, appointed by the Central Government has extended the deadline for receiving statements, complaints, and allegations from the public. The decision comes after considering various factors, including sporadic incidents of violence during the initial notice period, disrupting normal life and activity in parts of Manipur.

The Commission, chaired by Justice Ajai Lamba, Former Chief Justice, Gauhati High Court, along with members Shri Himanshu Shekhar Das, IAS (Retd.) and Shri Aloka Prabhakar, IPS (Retd.), was established under Section 3 of the Commissions of Inquiry Act, 1952. Their mission is to investigate the causes and spread of the violence and riots targeting members of different communities in Manipur.

The Terms of Reference for the Commission include examining the sequence of events leading to the violence, evaluating the administrative measures taken to prevent and handle the incidents, and considering any matters relevant to the inquiry.

The Commission has invited individuals and associations acquainted with the subject matter of the inquiry to submit statements and complaints within 45 days, in a format specified by the Commission. Additionally, the Government of Manipur has been urged to bring forth instances related to the inquiry.

Notably, the Commission, exercising its powers conferred by Rule 5(2)(b) of Commissions of Inquiry (Central) Rules, 1972, issued a notification on November 20, 2023, published by the Government of Manipur, Home Department. This notification, available on the Manipur Gazette's website, urged all concerned parties to provide their statements or complaints within the specified timeframe.

Acknowledging the need for an extension due to unforeseen circumstances, the Commission has

COMMISSION OF INQUIRY (MANIPUR VIOLENCE), 2023
Room No. 13 First Floor, Heritage Building,
Major Dhyan Chand National Stadium, New Delhi-110001.

F. No. COI/Manipur/2023-CN/297

New Delhi, the 4th January, 2024

To,

Shri Peter Salam
Nodal Officer, Commission of Inquiry
Government of Manipur
Room number 59, 2nd Floor,
Secretariat, South Block,
Imphal West District,
Manipur – 795001.

Subject: Public Notice: Extension of Time – Publication in Extra Ordinary Gazette of the State of Manipur.

Dear Peter,

In continuation to our letter No. COI/Manipur/2023-CN/262 dated the 20th November, 2023, please find enclosed Public Notice issued by the Commission of Inquiry (Manipur Violence), 2023 extending the time for filing statements or complaints/allegations by way of affidavits till 24th January, 2024.

2. It is requested to get the public notice (copy enclosed) published in the Extra Ordinary Gazette of the State of Manipur, immediately. It is also requested that the notice may be given widest circulation through radio, TV, Government social media handles and the district administration reaching up to the relief camps. A copy of the notice is also being sent to Director, DIPR for publication in newspapers in the State.

Encl: As above

Yours sincerely,


(Devesh Deval)

Secretary to the Commission of Inquiry

Copy to:-

1. Chief Secretary, Government of Manipur, Imphal.
2. Ms. Romita Devi, Director, Printing and Stationary, Government of Manipur, Imphal with a request to publish the public notice in the Extra Ordinary Gazette of the State of Manipur, immediately.
3. Director, DIPR for publication in newspapers in the State.

granted an extension until January 24, 2024, for the submission of statements and complaints. The modalities for executing affidavits are outlined in the (REGULATION OF PROCEDURE) ORDER, 2023, notified on August 26, 2023, and published on August 29, 2023, by the Government of Manipur, Home Department.

Source: [India Today NE](#)

RELEASED BSF DRIVER A MEMBER OF ARAMBAI TENGGOL, SOCIAL MEDIA USERS POINT OUT

Social media users were keen eyed enough to point out that the Meitei driver of Border Security Forces, who was released by a group of Kuki elders and youths on January 3 at a Kuki dominated area of Lailoiphai, near Sugnu, is believed to be one of the cadres of Meitei armed militia group – the Arambai Tenggol.

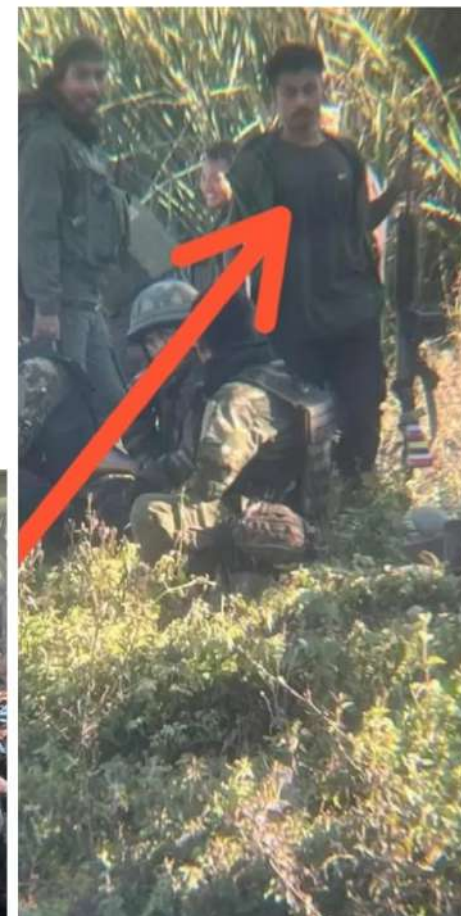
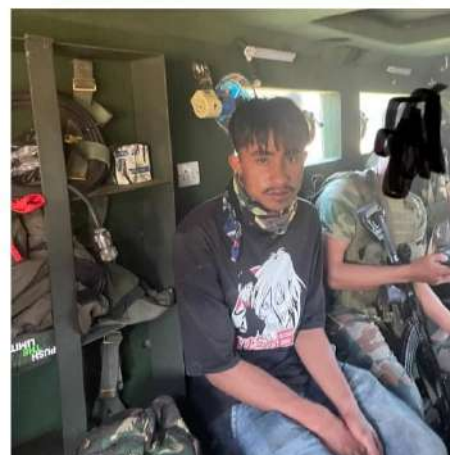
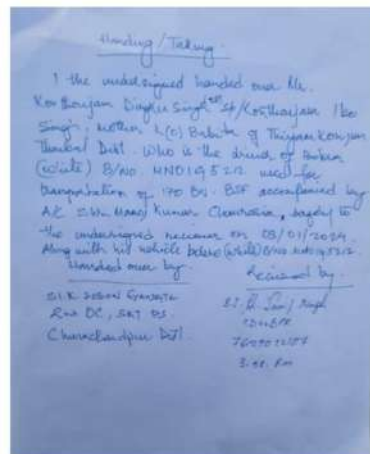
The photo of the released Meitei, which was captured during his custody in the hands of Kuki volunteers, resembles the image of one of the armed men in another group photo of Arambai Tenggol. If the allegation is true, there is an apprehension that the BSF deliberately used him for mischievous activity against the Kukis. It shows the BSF's incompetency in handling the strife-torn State between the warring communities.

The incident occurred when Dingku mistakenly drove into T. Lailoiphai, a Kuki village, while transporting BSF personnel to their headquarters at Serou Practical High School in Kakching. There was a heated argument between the BSF personnel and the Kuki volunteers, after which Dingku was safely released by the Kukis, showing humanity amidst war.

The BSF convoy had mistakenly taken a wrong route and ventured into T. Lailoiphai village, where they were intercepted by a Kuki mob that started verifying the identity of the drivers.

All other drivers were Muslims and were not harmed. Dingku was pulled down by the mob and an argument broke out between the mob and BSF personnel. An audio recording of Dingku conversing with the vehicle owner reveals he was blindfolded and taken to a hill by some youth and village elders, from where he was handed over to Assam Rifles and BSF. Dingku and the vehicle have been handed to Bishnupur police by Sangaikot police.

However, the irony is that, many social media users have pointed out that Dingku is a cadre of armed militia group Arambai Tenggol, currently responsible for the violence in Manipur. It is absurd to guaze that the Border Security



Force who are manning the buffer area in the present violence is using someone who has involvement in the armed militia group. It is known to all that Kukis cannot enter Meitei's area and vice-versa. The irresponsible BSF action almost led to bloodshed.

The BSF who are stationed in the area must be aware of the precarious situation prevailing at the moment, and any doubtful persons or activities could immediately result in a dreadful outcome.

Or another intriguing question which arises out of BSF action is that the BSF could be hand in glove with the Arambai Tenggol. Of all people, why did the BSF choose someone who has connection with the Arambai Tenggol to be their driver? Is he given the needed assistance by the BSF to spy on the Kuki areas?

MIZORAM CM LALDUHOMA MEETS PM MODI; TELLS EAM JAISHANKAR 'FENCING INDO-MYANMAR BORDER WILL REINFORCE BRITISH DIVISION'

Mizoram Chief Minister Lalduhoma met Prime Minister Narendra Modi in New Delhi on Thursday where the latter congratulated him over his victory and discussed different issues related to the international border with Myanmar.

Taking to social media, Lalduhoma later said the Prime Minister is looking forward to working with him and extended his wishes.

The Mizoram CM shared details of the ongoing border situation with Myanmar and said it is still unacceptable to people on both sides of the border.

He also said refugees seeking shelter in Mizoram aren't treated unequally and expressed his wish for a Greater Mizoram as a part of the Akhand Bharat.

Lalduhoma has so far spoken in favour of the unification of the 'Zo territory', which refers to certain contiguous regions of northeast India, Myanmar, Chittagong Hill Tracts (CHT) in Bangladesh etc.

Lalduhoma's party, the Zoram People's Movement (ZPM), has broken the traditional power shift in Mizoram between the Mizo National Front (MNF) and the Congress.

The ZPM broke the cycle by positioning itself as a third power and formed the government this year by harnessing the anti-incumbency against the established parties.

While the ZPM doesn't differ with the MNF on its issue of Mizo nationalism, the party has built its political base on the allegations of MNF purportedly losing its socio-political identity.

On Thursday, Lalduhoma expressed his stand that people on both sides of the India-Myanmar border wish to come under one administration. Meanwhile, the Prime Minister advised him to submit a proposal for a more structured Inner Line Permit (ILP) system.



Lalduhoma also met External Affairs minister S Jaishankar and said any move to set up barbed wire fencing along the India-Myanmar border would be "unacceptable".

Terming that the British colonials had historically separated the Mizos by carving Burma out of the then India, the CM said Mizos would not be able to accept the border and said the Mizo people have always dreamt of "becoming one nation under one administration".

He added that if any border fence is set up along the India-Myanmar border, it would effectively reinforce the "British division of the Mizo people".

The Mizoram CM's visit and his recent comments come days after the Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) officials told the media that it is contemplating to put up border fences on a stretch of 300 km of border between India and Myanmar.

India and Myanmar share a 1,643-km-long border, which is unfenced in many parts.

Source: [Indian Express](#)

OVER 3,200 CHRISTIANS ENDORSE STATEMENT DISSOCIATING FROM RECENT LUNCH HOSTED BY PM MODI

Over 3,200 eminent citizens from the Christian community, including TMC MP Derek O'Brien, have endorsed a statement dissociating from a lunch hosted for the community representatives by Prime Minister Narendra Modi on December 25 while flagging growing attacks and vilification from "members of the ruling regime" and the situation in Manipur. The Christian community has contributed significantly to the country's freedom struggle as well as in every sphere of life since independence, particularly in the educational, medical, social, cultural and political sectors, according to the statement.

"However, in the recent past, particularly since 2014, the Christians in India have been victims of continued attacks and vilification from members of the ruling regime all over the country," the statement said. "The Christians and Christian schools and institutions have been hounded and harassed, their places of worship destroyed, they have been denied their ordinary rights as citizens and been subject to denigration and demonization," it added.

The statement said the "anti-conversion laws which have been put into place in BJP-ruled states are used as weapons against the fundamental right to preach, practise and propagate one's religion". "Celebrations in schools have been stopped and Christians have been arrested without any warrant and put behind bars for no offence of theirs," it added.

The statement also mentioned the situation of violence in Manipur, where tension is continuing dominantly Hindu Meitei and dominantly Christian Kuki communities since May 3, 2023.

"The Christians of Manipur have been subject to constant attacks which still continue unabated and with apparent approval from the BJP Governments both in the State and at the Centre," it said.

The statement further mentioned "in the wake of all this, it is ironic that the prime minister hosted around 100 Christian representatives of different denominations on Christmas morning for a celebration". "While it is



certainly within his right as Prime Minister to host a reception for whomsoever he wishes one naturally would question the intention of this reception when he has not condemned a single attack on the Christians, under his Prime Ministership," it said. "Those invited to the Christmas reception were a select group of Christians. While the invitation was from the Prime Minister, here was an opportunity for them to courteously decline the invite in the light of what has been happening to the Christians in Manipur and elsewhere. Hence their acceptance of this invite was not in our name!" the statement said. "Today we the Christians of India together with conscious and committed citizens pledge to protect and promote the Constitution, Country and Citizens of India and to work with and work for all those who are victims of an unjust, insincere and authoritarian regime," it added. The signatories to the statement also include retired IAS officer M.G. Devashayam and retired IPS officer John Shilsi.

The civil society activists Apoorvanand, John Dayal, Shabnam Hashmi, Minakshi Singh, Mary Scaria and AC Michael had at a press conference last week said it is an irony that the year, which saw churches being burnt in Manipur in May ends with Prime Minister Modi felicitating leaders of the minority community. The prime minister met members of the Christian community at his residence in Delhi on Christmas and heaped praise on the community for its role in giving direction to the society and sense of service.

ZSCW ENDORSES TO FURTHER PROCESS OF TALK WITH GOI

The Zeliangrong Statehood Working Committee (ZSWC) on Wednesday stated that it is determined to work on the principle of close co-ordination, inclusive and collective effort of all Zeliangrong people.

'Therefore, several rounds of consultation were held with leaders of community based organizations, MLAs, constitutional and social experts, and intellectuals covering all sections and places at home and national levels, the Committee endorsed to further the process and progress of the talk with GOI,' the ZSCW Media Cell stated in a press release.

It may be mentioned here that after series of wide consultations made with leaders and intellectuals of the Zeliangrong society and leader, officials of Zeliangrong United Front (ZUF) have in consensus resolved to formulate a common body to address and assert the long drawn Zeliangrong political issues and coined it "Zeliangrong Statehood Working Committee" on June 25, 2023 at Guwahati and officially launched on October 10, 2023 at Guwahati, Assam.

The statement stated that Zeliangrong CSOs have acknowledged with gratitude the hard earned progress, sacrifices and achievements of ZUF that have prompted India to recognise anew the Zeliangrong political aspiration and could re-table the issues before the GOI. Further, it acknowledged and appreciated the maturity of ZUF for entering a military ceasefire agreement made with the Government of India as a prerogative measure for a peaceful and democratic dialogue to begin. Subsequently, the rounds of official and political talk being held and processed with the GOI.

The working committee includes: CR Zeliang as Convener, Gwangphun Gangmei -Secretary, Alan Jeme Retd, Judge, Co-Convener, Assam, Halakbe Newme, member Assam, Ambrose Riame Member Assam, Lunggineing Newme Member Assam, Kirang Jeme, Member Assam, Ningthaodai Co-Convener Manipur, Apeuna lheilung Co-Convener Nagaland, K Chungneithang Chiru Executive Member, Manipur, James Inka, members Manipur, Geulia H Ramlia Member, Nagaland. All heads of Zeliangrong CSOs are co-opted as representatives' members of the Committee.

"The Committee shall strive to settle the protracted Zeliangrong political aspiration and fulfillment of the vision of Haipou Jadonang and Rani Gaidinliu who in their lifetime have envisioned Zeliangrong Homeland and rendered selfless sacrifices for the attainment of Zeliangrong Statehood," it stated. Further, the apexes ZCSOs are entrusted to select and project more committed leaders for members of the committee.

The members of the committee on behalf of the talk delegation team and all Zeliangrong Civil Society Organizations have also appealed to all pastors, reverence, catechists, church leaders and members of all faiths and religious organizations to pray for the early settlement of the Zeliangrong Political issues now in the parley with the Government of India.

Source: [Morung Express](#)



It is the blood of the soldier that makes the general great.

— Italian Proverb



FEATURED ARTICLE

Identity and Violence in Manipur, India

Noor Anand Chawla

The first time the world took notice of the gross human rights violations being perpetrated in Manipur, India, was in July 2023, when a video of Manipuri women from the Kuki tribe who had been tortured, raped, and paraded around naked went viral on social media. These heinous acts came on the heels of the tremendously violent communal conflict that engulfed Manipur earlier in the year.

In reality, the violence follows a long and fraught socio-political history. The region has been prone to ethnic violence for decades, ever since the king of Manipur, Bodhachandra, signed an accord with the Government of India to become a part of the newly independent nation of India in 1949. The traditional conflict was between the Naga and Kuki tribes, but the recent violence has been between the Meiteis and Kukis.

Vibha Arora and Ngamjahao Kipgen explain the origin of these ethnic groups and their conflicts in their paper, “The Politics of Identifying with and Distancing from Kuki Identity in Manipur,” published in 2012 in the *Sociological Bulletin*. Historically, the Meitei dynasty ruled the independent kingdom of Manipur. After Manipur formally joined India, it was administered as a “C” scheduled state, along with nine other states, including Ajmer, Bhopal, and Himachal Pradesh. Unlike “A” states, which were overseen by an elected governor, “C” states were governed by chief commissioners

appointed by the President of India. Manipur became a Union Territory (e.g., a territory governed by the federal government) in 1956 and a finally full state, with elected governors, in 1972.

Arora and Kipgen describe Manipur as “a multi-ethnic society inhabited by three main ethnic groups—namely, the Nagas, the Kukis, and the Meiteis—who occupy distinct territories and topographies.” Manipur’s highlands are the domain of “Christianized Naga and Kuki tribes who constitute about 34 per cent of the total population,” with the Nagas living in the northern mountains and the Kukis in the southern hills. “The valley areas are largely inhabited by the Meiteis, who are predominantly Hindu,” they note. Other tribes, including the predominantly Muslim Pangans, live in Manipur as well, but the conflicts between the Naga, Kuki, and Meitei tribes shape the social landscape. Over the years, the permutations and combinations of clashes between constituents may have changed, but the violence continued unabated.

In his paper “Armed Violence in Manipur and Human Rights,” published in *The Indian Journal of Political Science* in 2011, Oinam Jitendra Singh

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points towards three prominent reasons for this. The first, he says, is political.

“The basic structural violence in Manipur today, at the political plane,” he argues, “is the total denial of a democratic space to the Manipuri people at the ground level for such a long time.” In other words, the Manipur monarchy was forced to transition to a “C” state, after which “a corrupt bureaucracy accountable to Delhi was running the show.”

The second factor is economic. Manipur came into India with an almost entirely agrarian economy, with a surplus of rice. After the merger, household industries declined as the economy was managed centrally. As Singh argues,

The opportunity to build an economy with a strong productive base was wasted by the corrupt bureaucracy here [Manipur] on the one side and by the remote controlled, centralized planning on the other. There was no room for local initiatives.

And finally, the third reason Singh offers for the conflict is social, caused by the influx of immigrants following the assimilation of Manipur into India. The state’s population rapidly increased with the arrival of new residents from mainland, with the demographic shifts leading to structural change that

alarmed the indigenous population. They naturally feel that their distinctive culture and identities are facing a grave threat from the Indo-Aryan peoples of being submerged under or assimilated by them.

Singh shows that these factors led to the rise of secondary violence in the late 1970s, as armed opposition groups, soon to be labelled “terrorist organizations,” developed along ethnic lines. As a result, the Parliament of India instituted the Armed Forces Special Powers Act of 1958, authorizing the Commissioner of Manipur to use armed forces to maintain public order. But the arbitrary and heavy-handed use of the Special Powers Act led to the “unfettered use of force even against innocent civilians,” he writes, with “gross human rights

violations including torture, extra-judicial execution, rape and enforced disappearances.”

The defining of one ethnic group “kindled and accentuated the ethnic identity of another group.”

Arora and Kipgen add to this, explaining that armed insurgencies are a common way to claim ethnic homelands, followed by “negotiating with the state and the national governments, and signed accords.” That being said, few of those signed accords “have engendered durable peace and participatory development.” They wonder,

How many ethnic groups are really assessing the success of their political elites in facilitating development and trickling down resources after the formation of exclusive homelands? [...] While particular insurgents disappear or get absorbed into the political mainstream, insurgency per se does not decline, as other insurgents arise.

Insurgency can be a profitable business, they note, but it just leads to more disorder.

Ch. Sekholal Kom’s “Ethnic Mobilization and Militance in Northeast India: A Case of Manipur,” published in *The Indian Journal of Political Science* in 2010, had already highlighted the role of ethnic mobilization in militant formations in Manipur. As Kom notes, the defining of one ethnic group “kindled and accentuated the ethnic identity of another group.”

The idea of “ethnic identity” acted as a contagion, he explains. “The prospect of greater autonomy for one group stimulated similar demands from other groups.” Should one group be awarded political power and resources based on ethnicity, why should they not also go to another group?

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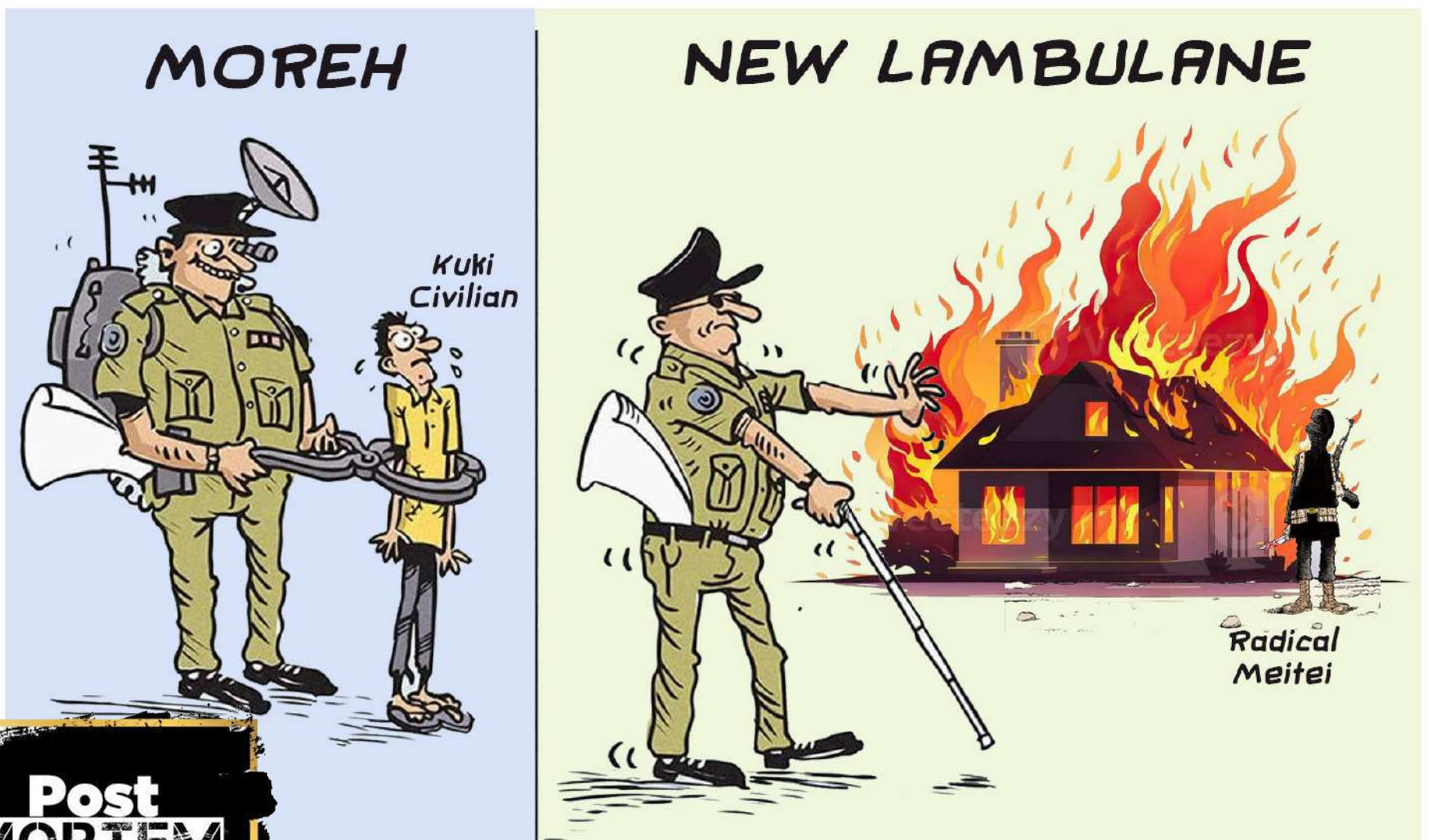
“Most of the political developments in Northeast, from reorganization to protracted violence, are intrinsically linked to the question of ethnicity,” he writes. Ethnic differences—and the mobilization of those differences in the context of Manipur’s politics—has led to what he describes as “ethnic militancy” in the region. “These ethnic militants...have become the most resorted means for ethnic assertion and bargaining and even to the extent of achieving economic political power.”

Kom sees ethnic militancy as “one of the most serious threats to peace, security and development” in the region. Moreover, the instability and violence has been made even worse by the state, which “has failed to contain militancy through negotiations, dialogues and peace accords and instead countered by launching a massive counter insurgency offensive through its military and intelligence.” Insurgency begets insurgency.

Kom offers a solution to the government of Manipur, requesting that they address ethnic aspirations by providing autonomy to each group in a guided manner so that conflicts may be reduced. He ends with poignant advice that rings especially true in today’s context, pointing out that that a “resolution requires that a meaningful and acceptable political arrangement...meet[s] competing ethnic demands.” The state must demonstrate that it’s “serious in finding a lasting solution despite the many odds that would be inevitable.”

In other words, writes Kom, the Government of Manipur, like all parties involved in the conflict and resolution, needs “to tread all tracks and walk the talk.”

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THE IMPARTIAL ACTION AND THE INACTION



The Children of War in the Hills

We sit in wait for the elders to come home.
We spend our days counting the foodgrains,
We spend our nights counting the stars.
The roof of our house is falling apart but who's to blame
Because all we know is how tight our mother's hands hold us,
The smell of her blood will never leave us, it will stay.
We don't know much but if what the cobbler uncle said is true,
We may learn to speak in new languages of anger, fear and forgiveness.
We've seen violence too old for our infant eyes,
We know a violent pain has swept our land,
We know that pain travels from the heart and ends up buried in the earth.
The sky above us seems sadder than the sky above
the children in the park and swimming pool.
Houses can hurt and clothes can become red,
And windows are safest when they stay shut and dark.
Our toys can burn and soldiers can die too.
We know we may not see each other the next day,
"Let's take a picture now."

- Jacquelyn Laltanpuii Suantak