

# Thingkho *Le* Malcha

A Daily Newsletter by KSO Media & Documentation Cell



## LUNGOUGIN HAOKIP (21 YEARS)

S/O HENKHOLAL HAOKIP

ADDRESS: SONGPHEL, SADAR HILLS

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

PLACE OF DEATH: SAIKUL, SADAR HILLS

CAUSE OF DEATH: SHOT DEAD 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.

# TRIBAL LEADERS URGE HOME MINISTER TO RETAIN ASSAM RIFLES BATTALIONS AT THEIR POSTS IN MANIPUR

The Indigenous Tribal Leaders' Forum (ITLF), which represents the Kuki-Zo tribes in Manipur, has formally requested Union Home Minister Amit Shah to ensure that the Assam Rifles remain stationed in their current positions throughout the conflict-affected state. This appeal comes in response to proposed plans to replace the Assam Rifles with the Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF) in several critical areas.

In their letter to the Home Minister, the ITLF emphasizes the significant role that the Assam Rifles has played in managing the ethnic strife within Manipur. They argue that the Assam Rifles' deep understanding of local customs and sensitivities has been pivotal in maintaining peace and safeguarding vulnerable communities amid ongoing unrest. The forum asserts that the presence of the Assam Rifles has been crucial in mitigating violence and enforcing ceasefires in particularly sensitive regions, which has contributed to a decrease in violence and allowed civilians to resume their livelihoods.

The ITLF praises the Assam Rifles for its neutral stance and effectiveness in crisis management, citing the force's role in rescuing thousands of civilians during last year's violence. They highlight that the Assam Rifles' reputation for impartiality and its motto, "Friends of the Hill People," have earned it the trust of minorities affected by the conflict. This trust has been instrumental in creating a sense of security, reducing the likelihood of violence stemming from misunderstandings and tensions, and enabling many civilians, particularly those living near buffer zones, to return to farming and other work.

The ITLF's letter criticizes the proposed replacement of the Assam Rifles with the CRPF, expressing concerns over the CRPF's perceived lack of local knowledge and potential partiality. They point out that some CRPF personnel are from the Meitei community, which is currently involved in the conflict, raising fears of possible bias and worsening of existing tensions. The forum warns that if the government acts on the demands of Meitei groups like COCOMI to remove the Assam Rifles, it could be perceived as partisan, favoring the



majority Meitei community over the vulnerable Kuki-Zo tribes.

The ITLF specifically objects to the removal of the 9 Assam Rifles and 22 Assam Rifles units stationed in critical areas near Churachandpur and Kangpokpi. They argue that replacing these forces could be seen as favoring the Meitei community, which might undermine the trust established with the Kuki-Zo tribes. They emphasize that the Assam Rifles has demonstrated a consistent track record of neutrality and professionalism, even when criticized by various groups. For instance, the Assam Rifles has successfully prevented violence escalation by blocking unauthorized movements across buffer zones, which has been crucial in maintaining stability.

The ITLF argues that the CRPF's lack of familiarity with the local terrain and sensitivities could exacerbate tensions. They cite concerns about the CRPF's potential partiality, noting that the Deputy Inspector General (DIG) of the CRPF, Huidrom Premjit, is a Meitei who has been accused of failing to remain neutral during recent hostilities. Deploying the CRPF among the Kuki-Zo community could potentially provoke unease and lead to renewed violence due to a breakdown in trust and possible emboldening of communal Meitei forces.

Despite some criticism directed at the Assam Rifles from various quarters, including the Kuki-Zo community for actions such as confiscating

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weapons and dismantling bunkers, the ITLF maintains its support for the force due to its overall neutrality and effectiveness. They recall a specific incident where the Assam Rifles prevented a potential bloodbath by blocking Meitei police commandos from crossing a military buffer zone into Churachandpur, highlighting the force's critical role in preventing an escalation of violence.

In contrast, the ITLF accuses the Manipur Police, particularly its commandos, of showing bias and collaborating with militant groups against tribal communities, which has further complicated the conflict. They argue that the Manipur Police have been

more involved in supporting militant groups like the Arambai Tenggol in attacking tribal villages, making the case that removing the Assam Rifles in favor of the CRPF would be a serious injustice to the Kuki-Zo tribes and could significantly increase the risk of violence in Manipur.

The ITLF urges the central government to reconsider its decision and retain the Assam Rifles in their current roles to ensure ongoing stability and protection for the Kuki-Zo tribes, emphasizing the critical need for impartial and effective security forces in the region.

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## KUKI-ZO WOMEN IN LAMKA PROTEST REMOVAL OF ASSAM RIFLES FROM BUFFER ZONES

Hundreds of Kuki-Zo women from Lamka staged a sit-in protest today at Peace Ground, Tuibong, in response to the central government's decision to remove Assam Rifles from buffer zone areas. The protest was organized under the aegis of the All Women of Churachandpur, which includes prominent women's organizations such as the Kuki Women Union, Hmar Women Association, Zomi Mothers' Association, and the Mizo People's Convention Women Wing.

The protestors expressed their concerns over the planned removal of the 9th and 22nd Assam Rifles battalions, which are set to be replaced by the Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF). The Kuki-Zo community perceives this move as biased, alleging that it favors the majority Meitei community at the expense of the vulnerable Kuki-Zo tribes. The two battalions are currently stationed at Kangvai and Kangpokpi, critical frontline positions in the region.

During the protest, women leaders submitted a memorandum to the Deputy Commissioner of Churachandpur, addressed to Union Home Minister Amit Shah, urging the central government to reconsider the decision. The memorandum highlights the community's fear that the removal of Assam Rifles, who they view as neutral and protective, could exacerbate tensions in the already volatile region.



In a related incident, the Thangting Area Chiefs' Association has imposed an indefinite total shutdown along National Highway 2 in an effort to prevent the Assam Rifles from leaving the district. A roadblock was established at Torbung, where women protesters also staged a sit-in, vowing to continue their demonstrations. Tomorrow, women from the Kangvai and Gohol areas are expected to carry out the protests.

The move to replace Assam Rifles has also sparked political opposition, with 10 Kuki MLAs writing to Prime Minister Narendra Modi on August 2, voicing their strong objections to the proposal. The Kuki-Zo community continues to rally against what they perceive as a threatening shift in the region's security dynamics.

# PROTESTS ERUPT IN SAIKUL AGAINST REMOVAL OF ASSAM RIFLES

Protests erupted in Kangpokpi's Saikul Sub Division as residents voiced their strong opposition to replace the 22nd Assam Rifles with the Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF) in various parts of Kangpokpi District, including Saikul. The alleged Manipur Government move, presented to the Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA), has sparked significant backlash among the local population, who view it as an unjust decision that undermines their security and trust.

Lun Mate, a prominent Kuki-Zo leader from Saikul argues during the protest that the decision to replace the Assam Rifles with the CRPF is illogical and unacceptable.

He emphasized that if the situation necessitates the removal of a specific unit or battalion of the Assam Rifles, it should be replaced by another Assam Rifles battalion or, if deemed ineffective, by a stronger military presence such as the army.

"Why the CRPF?" he questioned, reflecting the broader sentiment that the Assam Rifles have a deep understanding of local dynamics due to their longstanding presence in the region.

"This is not about questioning the credibility of the CRPF, but about ensuring the security force that best understands and can effectively manage local issues remains in place", he added.

Saikul's protest against the removal of Assam Rifles serves as a united declaration from the Kuki-Zo people in the region, making their stance clear, that they cannot allow this unjust removal to proceed.

"The message is loud and clear," Mate said at the protest. "We will not stand by while decisions are made that compromise our safety and well-being."

Mate also called on the Ministry of Home Affairs to act impartially when making decisions related to the Manipur conflict, and demanded that the voices of the local population be heard and considered, highlighting that they are equal citizens of India and deserve fair treatment.

We urge the MHA to recognize our rights and needs," he asserted. "We deserve the same consideration as any other citizens of this country."

Meanwhile, the Kuki Inpi Sadar Hills have made an urgent appeal for the Assam Rifles to remain stationed in Manipur, highlighting their crucial role in maintaining peace and stability amid ongoing ethnic clashes in the region.

The organization strongly warned that withdrawing the Assam Rifles could severely threaten efforts to restore harmony and might lead to public unrest. The Kuki Inpi Sadar Hills emphasized that any public disturbances or fury resulting from the withdrawal would not be their responsibility.

"The continued presence of the Assam Rifles is deemed essential for ongoing peacekeeping efforts and the safety of all communities involved," asserted the Kuki apex body.

The Kuki Inpi Sadar Hills praised the Assam Rifles for their pivotal role during the ethnic clashes in Manipur, commending the paramilitary force for maintaining peace and security during these turbulent times.

Since violence erupted on May 3, 2023, the Assam Rifles have demonstrated exceptional bravery and commitment, ensuring the safety of both the Kuki and Meitei communities. They have successfully rescued and safeguarded over 70,000 internally displaced Kuki individuals stranded in Imphal and 20,000 Meitei individuals trapped in the hill regions. Their dedication to impartiality and fairness, treating both communities with equal respect and care, has been widely praised.

The Assam Rifles have consistently monitored the situation on the ground, swiftly and efficiently addressing issues. Their deep understanding of local dynamics and challenges has enabled them to manage and mitigate conflicts effectively, ensuring the safety and well-being of all residents, the Kuki Inpi Sadar Hills stated.

## ANY ATTEMPTS TO DESTROY SELOITHA BRIDGE WILL BE MET WITH STRONG RESISTANCE: KUKI INPI CHANDEL RESPONDS N. BIREN SINGH

In a sharp response to the Manipur Government's statements made in the ongoing Assembly session with regard to dismantling the Seloitha Bridge, which is under construction purely funded by the Kuki community, the Kuki Inpi Chandel has warned that any attempts to compromise or damage the Seloitha Bridge would be met with strong resistance, and the Manipur State Government would be held fully accountable for any consequences that may arise.

A press release issued on Friday by the Kuki apex body of Chandel district stated that the recent statements made by the Manipur Chief Minister concerning the Seloitha Bridge were deeply troubling, especially in light of the state's documented history of supporting actions that have severely impacted the Kuki-Zo community.

"The assertions made by the government are not only incongruous but also reflect a blatant disregard for human rights, considering the orchestrated violence and systemic injustices that have been perpetrated against the Kuki-Zo people under the current administration led by Chief Minister N. Biren Singh," it said.

Kuki Inpi Chandel said, "The Seloitha Bridge holds profound significance for the Kuki-Zo Territory, serving as a vibrant symbol of the community's heritage, culture, and unyielding spirit. This landmark is a testament to the Kuki-Zo people's identity, sovereignty, and determination, standing as an enduring symbol of their resilience and unwavering commitment to their homeland."

Imperatively, the Kuki apex body has clarified that the Seloitha Bridge was integral to the Kuki-Zo community and has no connection to the Meitei community. Any interference from the Meitei is not



only unjustified but also constitutes a serious breach of the Kuki-Zo community's territorial integrity and cultural sanctity, it stated.

The Kuki Inpi Chandel asserted that the bridge was beyond the scope of the Meitei's interests or the jurisdiction of the radicalized Manipur State Government. The historical and ongoing displacement of the Kuki-Zo people from the Manipur Valley underscores the need for the Kuki-Zo community to exercise exclusive rights over their land and cultural assets, free from the arbitrary actions of the state government, it said.

"This is a community bridge, initiated and funded collectively by the public, which is one of a kind and rare in the history of Manipur," Kuki Inpi said, adding that the bridge would be the only lifeline once built as the only bridge connecting Chandel district and Churachandpur has now fallen into the jurisdiction of the Meiteis and is inaccessible to the Kuki-Zo community.

The Manipur government rather than opposing this noble initiative should think of funding and expediting its construction, it added.

# CENTRE'S INDECISIVENESS HAS REVIVED INSURGENCY IN MANIPUR: BJP MLAS

More than 45 days after Union Home Minister Amit Shah said that the Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) would reach out to the Meitei and Kuki-Zo groups in Manipur, no such meeting or outreach has materialised.

Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) MLAs in Manipur said that the indecisiveness of the Union Government in resolving the ethnic conflict has revived insurgency in the State, with banned groups running extortion rings and arms smuggling rackets.

The sudden removal of Governor Anusuiya Uikey on July 27, days after she met Congress leader Rahul Gandhi when the latter was visiting the State on July 8, has also led to many questions. Ms. Uikey, popular among both warring communities served 15 months at the Raj Bhavan. She took charge days before ethnic violence broke out between the tribal, hills-based Kuki-Zo and the valley-based Meitei communities in the State on May 3, 2023.

## MHA outreach promise

On June 16, Mr. Shah met Ms Uikey in Delhi. A day later, he chaired a review of the security situation in Manipur which was attended by top police, army and State government officials.

After the meeting, the MHA issued a statement, saying, "Home Minister underscored the importance of coordinated approach to resolve the ongoing ethnic conflict. He said that the MHA will talk to both the groups, Meiteis and Kukis, so as to bridge the ethnic divide, at the earliest."

## '20 BJP MLAs ready to quit'

Paolienlal Haokip, BJP MLA from Saikot in Churachandpur said he has not been approached by anyone from the Union government. He added that he was also not aware of any meeting of public representatives or members of civil society groups with A.K Mishra, the MHA's adviser for the North East.

One of the BJP MLAs from the valley said, on condition



of anonymity, that if the Centre does not act fast, then around 20 legislators would be forced to quit the party.

"For the last 14 months, no solution has been found. Except lip service from the Home Minister or the Prime Minister, nothing has changed. No party is more important than the people of Manipur. There are around 20 MLAs who are ready to quit the party," the BJP member said. The BJP has 37 MLAs in the 60-member State Assembly.

## False communal narrative

Another MLA said that attempts were being made to give a communal colour to the ongoing conflict. "In the past two months, You Tube and social media is flooded by videos that it is a clash between Christians and Hindus. Obviously, someone is funding the narrative. While religious places of Kuki-Zo were torched, so were Meitei temples, but Naga churches were not touched. Who is behind all this and who benefits from this?" the second MLA asked.

While Naga churches have not been targetted specifically, a few churches of the Meitei community have come under attack from radical Meitei groups like the Arambai Tenggol. The outfit has a stated objective of espousing and reviving Sanamahism,

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the pre-Hindu religious identity of Meiteis, among their community.

On June 10, 2023, the MHA had constituted a 51-member peace committee chaired by Ms. Uikey which never took off as it was rejected by both the communities.

### **'Feeling neglected'**

Wilubou Newmai from the Naga community who was part of the defunct committee called for it to be revived with new members. "Conflict such as that in Manipur not only causes distress and suffering among people, but also hampers progress and development. Peace committee should be revived with new faces acceptable to all the communities. Manipur violence is not related to religion. Northeast is one of the most sensitive regions in India where there are so many ethnic communities with different religion and cultural background," he said.

Muan Tombing, the general secretary of the Indigenous Tribal Leaders Forum, a Kuki-Zo body, said, "We were eagerly waiting for the formation of a new government at the Centre, but so far the issues have not been addressed. We feel neglected."

Jeetendra Ningomba, a representative of the Coordinating Committee on Manipur Integrity (COCOMI), one of the largest Meitei civil society organisations, said that they were yet to receive any invitation from the Centre.

Manipur Chief Minister N. Biren Singh informed the State Assembly on July 31 that 226 people have been killed and 39 people are missing due to the conflict so far, while 59,414 people are living in relief camps.

Source: [The Hindu](#)

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## **TODAY IN HISTORY/EVENTS RECALLED: AUGUST 05, 2023**

### **A RECAP OF THE HORRIFIC INCIDENTS ON AUGUST 05, 2023 AS A RESULT OF PRE-PLANNED STATE-SPONSORED ETHNIC CLEANSING POGROM AGAINST KUKI-ZO**

At approximately 2:30 AM, Meitei individuals set fire to 18 houses belonging to the Kuki-Zo community in the Ukha Gate area of Bishnupur district. Notably, some of these houses were destroyed using a JCB excavator to prevent the fire from spreading to nearby Pangal houses. Additionally, this destructive act extended to include the burning of one church affiliated with the Evangelical Churches Association and one Sunday School building.

In a troubling incident that occurred at around 3:00 AM, combined forces comprised of Manipur state forces led by Manipur Police Commandos and Arambai Tenggol launched an attack on Pholjang village near Kangvai in Lamka district. The engagement involved sustained firing, which persisted until 7:30 PM.

Regrettably, two village volunteers have been injured, and even more tragically, two village volunteers have lost their lives.

Kuki-Zo houses in Langgol in Imphal West were looted and Burned down by the Meitei mob at around 6:30 PM. Around 30 houses were razed in Hebron Veng and Gamngai Veng of Langgol.

Meitei mobs burned down abandoned Kuki-Zo houses in New Checkon, Imphal East. Some media outlets, like The Sangai Express based in Imphal, attributed the blame to the Kukis, citing a short circuit as the cause. The report has been criticized for potentially misrepresenting the situation and obscuring the actions of the Meitei groups involved.



# VILLAGE VOLUNTEER EASTERN ZONE CONDEMNS PROPAGANDA SURROUNDING MEETEI RESETTLEMENT IN MOREH, CALLS FOR IMMEDIATE WITHDRAWAL OF MEITEI COMMANDOS

In a strongly worded statement, the Village Volunteer Eastern Zone (VV EZ) expressed deep concern over what it describes as “propaganda” and “misleading information” being spread by certain groups regarding the resettlement demands of the Meitei community in Moreh town, Tengnoupal District. The organization emphasized the need to maintain peace and security in the region and outlined several points addressing the situation.

1. **Call for Immediate Withdrawal of Manipuri Commandos:** The VV EZ demanded the immediate withdrawal of Manipuri commandos from Moreh, claiming they are not needed by the local population. The group accused the commandos of facilitating illegal drug operations allegedly run by Manipuri militants based in Myanmar, referred to as VBIGs (Valley Based Insurgent Groups).

2. **Allegations of Narco-Terrorism:** The statement accused Meitei narco-terrorists of terrorizing the indigenous Kuki-Zo people along the Indo-Myanmar border for decades. The group alleged collusion between these terrorists and the Myanmar Junta, including the planting of landmines targeting innocent villagers and the Indian Army.

3. **Support for Anti-India Activities:** The VV EZ further claimed that Meitei narco-terrorists illegally residing in Moreh have played a crucial role in supporting terrorism against India. They alleged that these groups have been funding and sheltering VBIGs operating from the Sagaing and Mandalay regions of Myanmar, in collaboration with the Meitei-centric Manipur state government.

4. **Controversy Surrounding SBI Moreh Branch:** The organization also raised concerns about the ownership of the lone SBI branch in Moreh, alleging that the



building's owner is a leader of the CorCom terrorist group. The VV EZ claimed that the local community has been demanding the relocation of the bank due to these alleged connections.

5. **Warning Against Misleading Propaganda:** The VV EZ warned the Meitei community and the Manipur state government against misleading the public and the Central Government with what it describes as “concocted and unrealistic” narratives about Moreh's history.

6. **Constitutional Provisions and Land Rights:** Citing Article 371C of the Indian Constitution, which grants special provisions for the hill tribes of Manipur, the VV EZ asserted that Meiteis cannot legally own land in the hill districts. The group labeled Meitei residents in Moreh as “illegal immigrants” and called for their deportation, alleging they are originally from Myanmar.

7. **Call for Resolution of Kuki-Zo Political Issues:** The statement concluded with a warning to the Manipur government and its agencies to refrain from implementing any policies in Moreh until the political issues concerning the Kuki-Zo community are resolved. The VV EZ cautioned that failure to do so would result in the state government being held responsible for any consequences.

# SUPREME COURT EXTENDS TERM OF JUSTICE GITA MITTAL COMMITTEE BY 6 MONTHS

The Supreme Court today (August 5) granted the extension of Justice Gita Mittal Committee for 6 months. The Committee is presently seeing several humanitarian aspects of the ethnic violence in Manipur.

The bench led by CJI DY Chandrachud comprising Justices JB Pardiwala and Manoj Misra passed the following order :

“The committee chaired by Justice Gita Mittal stands extended by 6 months.”

Previously, Senior Advocate Vibha Makhija, who had been appointed as the amicus to represent the committee, mentioned before the bench led by CJI DY Chandrachud that the committee’s term ended on July 15. She submitted that an extension is necessary for the committee to continue its important work.

The Justice Gita Mittal Committee was constituted by the Top Court in August last year to address the humanitarian concerns stemming from the ethnic clashes in Manipur. The development came subsequent to the Court slamming the Manipur police investigation as “tardy” and expressing anguish at the sexual violence committed against women amidst the sectarian conflict.

The bench of CJI DY Chandrachud, Justice JB Pardiwala and Justice Manoj Misra constituted the committee comprising - i. Justice Gita Mittal, former Chief Justice



of the High Court of Jammu and Kashmir; ii. Justice Shalini Phansalkar Joshi, former Judge of the High Court of Judicature at Bombay; and iii. Justice Asha Menon, former Judge of the High Court of Delhi.

The wide-ranging mandate of the committee includes the following key tasks : (1) Enquire into the nature of violence against women that occurred in the State of Manipur from 4 May 2023; (2) Submit a report to the Court on the steps required to meet the needs of the survivors including measures for dealing with rape trauma, providing social, economic, and psychological support, relief and rehabilitation in a time bound manner; (3) Ensure free and comprehensive medical and psychological care to survivors; (4) Ensure conditions of dignity in relief camps set up for displaced persons including suggestions for additional camps; (5) look into the disbursements of necessary compensations to victims of sexual assault, violence and next of kin. Source: **Live Law**

“ The darkest places in hell are reserved for those who maintain their neutrality in times of moral crisis - Dante Alighieri ”



Prof. Jangkhongam Doungel finished his graduation with Honours in Political Science at Patkai Christian College, Nagaland in 1993. He obtained his M.A. (Political Science) with First Class, 3<sup>rd</sup> Position in Manipur University in 1996. He started his teaching career as Lecturer in Department of Political Science at Bethany Christian College, Lamka (Churachandpur), Manipur with effect from April 1996 to May, 1997. He was a faculty member in Department of Political Science, Government Lawngtlai College, Lawngtlai, Mizoram with effect from 8th May 1998 to 9th July, 2012 and joined Department of Political Science, Mizoram University as Associate Professor on 10th July 2012 and promoted to Professorship wef 10th July, 2015. He is a life member and Executive Member of Indian Political Science Association (IPSA), Life Member and Vice President of North East India Political Science Association (NEIPSA), Life member of North East India Council for Social Science Research (NEICSSR), North East India History Association (NEIHA), Mizo History Association (MHA), Kuki Research Forum (KURF) and Life Member as well as Adviser of Mizoram Political Science Association (MIPSA). He presented 117 papers in International, National, Regional and State Level Seminars across the country. He chaired technical sessions 33 times in International, National and state level seminars and conferences. He has three single author books, one edited book and two co-edited books to his credit. He published 40 papers in journals, 33 papers in edited volumes and 4 papers in proceedings. He delivered key

note address 20 times in National and State Level Seminar in various places including Jamia Millia Islamia on 28th August, 2019. He also delivered 28 lectures as Speaker of International and National Webinar/Online Workshops in different webinar programmes up till now. He is also often invited as Resource Person by Mizo Zirlai Pawl (MZP), Mizo Student Union (MSU), Zo Indigenous Forum (ZIF), Zofa Global Network (ZGN), Zo Reunification Organisation (ZORO) and some other associations in Mizoram. He is also panellist a number of times in North East Live Channel, Guwahati which is the only English Channel in North East India. He is also a panellist in LPS Cable Network, Aizawl, Zonet Cable Network, Aizawl and Doordarshan, Aizawl from time to time. He has also been often interviewed by BBC, NDTV and some national channels from time to time. He is also Executive Editor of Rising Asia Journal, Kolkata and Editorial Board Member of Contemporary Social Scientist. He is a Fulbright Senior Research Fellow enjoying the prestigious Fulbright Nehru Academic and Professional Excellence Fellowship Programme for 9 months (1st April – 31st December, 2021) and affiliated in Department of Political Science, University of Cincinnati, Cincinnati, Ohio State, United States of America.

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In this exclusive interview with Abhish K. Bose Prof Doungel discusses the ground situation in Manipur which witnessed clashes amidst tribes.

**Abhish K. Bose : The high voltage one-sided onslaught against the Kuki population in Imphal has caused immense damage to the coexistence of the indigenous population. Fearing harsh setbacks, the Kukis went en bloc to Churachandpur and Kangpokpi districts of Manipur and some even went to the neighbouring states of Manipur. The mutual distrust and antagonism is unprecedented. What is your inference on the ground situation?**

J Doungel : The attack upon the Kuki population was undertaken physically by Arambai Tenggol, Meitei Leepun and some Meitei chauvinists but it was said to be planned and orchestrated by some powerful political authority. There are many right-thinking Meitei leaders, intellectuals and Meitei population who want to live in peace and harmony with the tribal people of the state but they are silenced and suppressed.

Attempts have been made by some chauvinist Meitei leaders to dilute Article 371 C of the Constitution of India by pushing for legislative changes for the settlement of Meitei population in the Hill Areas of Manipur, the ancestral land of the tribals, namely, the Naga tribes and the Zo ethnic (Kuki-Zo) tribes. The Congress Government led by R.K. Jaichandra Singh made an attempt to enforce the Manipur Land Revenue and Land Reforms Act, 1986 in the Hill Areas of Manipur but was withdrawn again as the tribal people were on the warpath. After that, the Congress Government led by Okram Ibobi Singh passed three bills on 31st August, 2015 in the Manipur Legislative Assembly, namely, Protection of Manipur People's Bill, 2015; Manipur Land Revenue and Land Reform (Seventh Amendment) Bill, 2015; and Manipur Shops and Establishments (Second Amendment) Bill, 2015. On the night when these three bills were passed i.e. 31st August, 2015, the residences of six MLAs of Manipur Legislative Assembly from the undivided Churachandpur District were burnt down by angry youths. The aggrieved youth were shot with live bullets, resulting in the tragic loss of nine valuable

lives because of the merciless shooting by Manipur Police Commando. Curfew was declared and flag march was done at Lamka (Churachandpur). As the situation was too volatile and problematic, the Governor of Manipur withheld his assent to the bills. Instead, the Governor forwarded the bills to the President of India for consideration but Rashtrapati Bhawan was silent on the bills. Hence, the bills could not proceed any further.

The situation appeared to have calmed after the sad episode of the three controversial bills but multiple problems arose with the formation of BJP Government led by N. Biren Singh since 2018. As some of the Zo ethnic tribes in Hill Areas of Manipur openly engage in poppy cultivation, Chief Minister N. Biren Singh issued a strict order to stop poppy cultivation and to destroy poppy fields in the hills. The initiative received wide support and even within the Zo ethnic community, civil societies, philanthropic organisations, churches and intellectual circles vigorously campaigned against poppy cultivation. While the initiative of the Government of Manipur with regard to environmental protection is laudable, instead of engaging experts and raising awareness, there are reports of local people being terrorised through the use of force. It was widely circulated on social media that the BJP Yuva Mocha volunteers went to hill areas such as Koubru with pistols in 2022 in the pretext of plantation drive.

The geographical area of Manipur is 22,327 Sq. kms, out of which, valley constitutes 10 percent of geographical area of the state and Hill Areas constitute 90 percent of the geographical area of the state. So far as population ratio is concerned, the valley constitutes 58.9% of the population while the Hill Areas constitute 41.1% percent of the population as per 2011 census. Tribal settlements in the hill areas of Manipur predate the Indian Forest Act, 1865 which was the first forest act enacted by the British Colonial Government in India. In fact, the tribal people, both Naga tribes and Kuki-Zo tribes,

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have inhabited the Hill Area of Manipur many centuries before the advent of British colonialism. By selectively declaring more than 20 different places in the hill districts inhabited by the tribals as reserved forests, protected forests, wildlife sanctuaries and wetlands, it appears that N. Biren Singh led BJP Government of Manipur tried to encroach the lands of the tribal people.

Gross human rights violations and fascist-like atrocities that are not expected from a democratically elected government already occurred under the BJP Government led by N. Biren Singh even before the ethnic violence broke out on 3rd May, 2023. On 20th February, 2023, K. Songjang Village in Churachandpur District was forcibly evicted under the pretext of a reserved forest, with no prior notice or warning. The villagers' homes were bulldozed without compassion, and police commandos, armed with sophisticated weapons, harassed and traumatized innocent civilians, including women and children. Additionally, places of worship were also demolished, in gross violation of international human rights as outlined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the Universal Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, and the Fundamental Rights in Articles 25-30 of the Constitution of India. Three churches, namely, Evangelical Baptist Convention Church (EBCC), Lutheran Church (LC) and Holy Spirit Catholic Church (HSCC) at Tribal Colony, Imphal were bulldozed at the wee hour of 2:30 AM on 11th April, 2023.

The BJP Government led by N. Biren Singh is no longer an inclusive government of the people of Manipur but rather an exclusive government for the interest of a particular community that continuously commits atrocities and hatred upon other communities particularly the Kuki-Zo tribes. This is very much true with regard to the violence which is going on now in Jiribam. It should be recollected that Mr. Seigoulen Singson was mercilessly killed and dumped into a river by some unknown miscreants on 14th May, 2024 but the Manipur Police and the Meitei-exclusive government of Manipur were totally silent upon the murder. However, when S. Saratkumar was killed by unknown miscreants on 6th June, 2024, the Manipur Police acted so fast to file FIR and the Manipur Government was so restless unlike the merciless murder of Seigoulen Singson on 14th May,

2024. There was no evidence that S. Saratkumar was killed by the Kukis but the community was still blamed by the so-called state police and state government. As the present government of Manipur openly sided one community over another community, it is unlikely that peace and tranquillity will prevail under this one-sided and oppressive leadership of N. Biren Singh. Therefore, it will be difficult for the Kuki-Zo people to trust N. Biren Singh. It may be said that two Kuki-Zo Ministers still serve under N. Biren Singh but that does not signify that the Kuki-Zo people accept the present government led by N. Biren Singh. In order to maintain peace and tranquillity in Manipur, the present geographical divide should be maintained where the Meitei are restricted to their area in the valley and the Kuki-Zo people to theirs in the hills.

**Abhish K. Bose : The violence against the tribals are continuing even after they fled Imphal. They are still being attacked on the border of Imphal. The government and the police authorities are still supporting the Meities. Will there be light at the end of the tunnel?**

J DOUNGEL : As stated earlier, there is no inclusive government in Manipur right now. The Government led by N. Biren Singh works exclusively for the Meiteis and sinisterly targets the Kuki-Zo people in order that they may be exterminated. In fact, if a democratically elected government is doing genocide action against a particular community, that is, Kuki-Zo community: there is no hope for normalcy. The future of Manipur is still very bleak. It is unlikely that Kuki-Zo people and Meitei people may live together again amicably like before. It is very doubtful now. It should be recollected that Arambai Tenggol, Meitei Leipun and some miscreants looted more than 6000 sophisticated arms and ammunition in front of the state police force personnel who were silent spectators to the drama. Over and above that, there were no efforts

*Contd.*

*Contd.*

from the Government of Manipur to recover those confiscated arms and ammunition. Instead of recovering arms, the Meitei miscreants were hand in glove with the state force who attacked and burnt Kuki villages. If the State Government and state forces jointly work together with one community to attack another community, it is unlikely that there will be light at the end of the tunnel. The present situation can be stated as Government of Manipur in alliance with Arambai Tengngoland some armed outfits who are fighting against the Kuki Zo tribes. If the state government is openly waging war against a particular community, it is unlikely that the targeted community (Kuki-Zo community) will trust the one-sided government. It may also be added that the Kuki-Zo people organise volunteers to defend their land because Kuki-Zo underground outfits who are now in Suspension of Operation (SoO) do not take up arms to defend their land as per the ground rules of SoO. Therefore, the Kuki-Zo people are neither concerned at all about expansion nor abrogation of SoO. Their main concern now is the protection of their land. These Kuki-Zo village volunteers are now wrongly labelled as Kuki militants and well-established armed outfits in valley are described as village volunteers by a section of media in Manipur valley.

**Abhish K. Bose : In most areas the kukis boycotted the general elections as they feel that the government is not paying heed to their problems. In fact this had saved the ruling dispensation from the apparent ire of the besieged community of Kukis in the frays. Was the election free and fair?**

J DOUNGEL : The Kuki-Zo people boycotted the election in some districts because they no longer trust the corrupted and communal system of the present political system in Manipur. Further, the Government of India is also just a silent spectator without any corrective steps. The election was not fair at all because some militant groups both in the hills and the valley spearheaded violence but they were not successful. It was exposed in different media including electronic and print media about election-related violence in Manipur and re-poll was also held in many polling stations. In spite of that, many Kuki-Zo voters cast their votes in the just concluded Lok Sabha elections which signify that

they still have faith in the political system and the Constitution of India.

**Abhish K Bose : The people in the plains are affected by floods and the hills by landslides. The fight is still tense because no concrete effort is being made by political leaders. How has the natural disasters aggravated people's misery?**

J DOUNGEL : The government system in Manipur is failing because it chooses to be exclusive rather than inclusive, led by communal and chauvinist Biren Singh. This one-sided government and corrupt political system offers little hope for the people on both sides. Though the nature of this exclusive government is to appease the Meiteis in the valley and to openly neglect the Kuki-Zo people in the hills, yet, there are reports of rehabilitation packages in the valley, where only three GCI sheets were distributed to flood and cyclone victims. The recipients were so angry that they destroyed the sheets which they received. Thus, the natural disaster really put the poor and needy people in untold sufferings both in the hills and valley, with the people of the hills being particularly neglected.

**Abhish K. Bose : How far larger issues have contributed to the crisis brewing in the northeast. Was the current issue a failure of the successive governments ruling the centre and the state in addressing the grievances of the indigenous population in a time-bound manner?**

J DOUNGEL : Yes, the current issue is the failure of successive governments in both the centre and the state. The incumbent BJP Government led by N. Biren Singh is responsible for the present communal violence and ethnic cleansing in Manipur. The detailed answer to this question has already been answered in the first question.

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*A journalist with fifteen years of experience Abhish K Bose was a staffer at The Times of India and The Deccan Chronicle – Asian Age.*

**THE BUZZ** SOCIAL MEDIA

**SAMUEL KHONGSAI**  
@SamKhongsai\_

#Manipur All Terrorist Organisations & Unlawful Associations in Manipur Are Meiteis  
Meiteis call names on Tribals, blame Tribals for the mess they created but Govt has the data which Meiteis can't manipulate. See list



PMO India and 9 others  
20:52 · 05 Aug 24 · 60 Views



**Sushant Singh** @SushantSin · 1d  
This has gone on for more than 450 days. Manipur doesn't seem to move Modi.

*'Miscreants took advantage of security lapses'*

Imphal, Aug. 3: Shots were fired and an abandoned house was torched in Manipur's Jiribam, triggering fresh tensions within a day of the Meitei and Hmar communities reaching an agreement to make efforts to restore normalcy in the district, officials said on Saturday.  
An abandoned house in Lalpani village was torched by armed men on Friday night, they said.  
"It is an isolated settlement consisting of few Meitei houses, and most of those were abandoned after violence broke out in the district. Miscreants, who are yet to be identified, took advantage of security lapses in the area to commit the arson," an official said.  
The armed men also fired several rounds of shells and gunshots, targeting the village, he said.  
Security forces were rushed to the area follow-

**OVER 200** people have been killed and thousands rendered homeless in ethnic violence between Meiteis and Kuki-Zo groups since May last year  
administration, Assam Rifles and CRPF personnel. Representatives of the Thadou, Paite and Mizo communities of the district were also present in the meeting.  
"The meeting resolved that both sides will make full efforts to bring normalcy and prevent incidents of arson and firing. Both sides shall give full cooperation to all the security forces operating in the Jiribam district. Both sides agreed to facilitate controlled and coordinated movement," a joint statement issued and signed by representatives of all the participating communities said.  
The next meeting will be



**THE PIED PIPER OF MANIPUR**





# RISE AND STAND TALL

Rise, brave Kukis, and stand tall,  
Your quest for justice, let it enthrall.  
In the face of oppression's might,  
Shine brighter, like a beacon in the night.

Let the fire of resilience burn deep,  
A flame that flickers not, nor sleeps.  
For you are the guardians of your rights,  
The champions of your people's plight.

Your voices, a thunderous roar,  
Echoing through the halls of power's core.  
Your footsteps, a drumbeat of pride,  
A march towards justice, side by side.

In the darkness of oppression's grasp,  
You are the light that will forever last.  
Your determination, a fortress strong,  
A shield that guards your rights, all day long.

So stand firm, dear Kukis, and never yield,  
Your pursuit of justice, let it forever seal.  
For you are the heroes of your own tale,  
The victors in the battle for your rights, prevail.

Let the winds of justice blow in your favour,  
And the rains of equality, forever nourish your labour.  
Your courage will pave the way,  
For a brighter tomorrow, a new dawn's ray.

*Moses H Khongsai*