

# Thingkho Le Malcha

A Daily Newsletter by KSO Media & Documentation Cell



## D. Phailien ECA RELIEF CENTRE

D. Phailien ECA Sunday School Hall, Lamka

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

**Total Inmates Registered: 189\***

Male: 92	Female: 97
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\*As on 11<sup>th</sup> August, 2023



## KUKI VICTIMS' UPDATE

As on 10.01.2024



**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.

# MEITEI GOVERNMENT CONTINUES TO VICTIMIZE KUKI-ZO BY SUSPENDING THREE OFFICIALS FOR HELPING STUDENTS, SAYS ITLF

The Indigenous Tribal Leaders' Forum has accused the Meitei government in Manipur of continuing to victimize the Kuki-Zo tribals by suspending three Education Department Officials belonging to the minority Kuki-Zo community, who tried to help tens of thousands of students whose education and careers are in peril because of ethnic violence.

In its press release on Saturday, the Tribal Leaders' Forum stated that suspending the three officials for acting in the interest of students was punitive and morally wrong, which would not be accepted by the Kuki-Zo community.

ITLF Spokesperson, Ginza Vualzong, said, "Ordering the three officials to shift to Imphal is the height of insensitivity, as everyone knows they will be butchered the moment they enter the Meitei-dominated areas."

"Under the circumstances, Jangkhohao Haokip (ZEO, Churachandpur), Lhingtinneng (ZEO, Kangpokpi), and L. Taithul (DI of Schools, Samulamlan) were well within their rights and had the moral responsibility to guide schools in tribal areas in seeking CBSE affiliation," the Tribals' Leader said.

ITLF asked, "As for the Meitei community and government - if you do not want us to live together with you, why are you stopping our schools from joining other boards? This shows the majority community is trying to punish us in any way possible."

Since May 3, 2023, the Kuki-Zo tribals have been butchered and driven out of the valley, their homes and churches burned to the ground, and Meiteis did not even spare women, children, and the mentally-challenged in what can only be described as an 'ethnic cleansing exercise,' it added.

ITLF stated that since the state education board and offices of all technical institutes are based in Imphal and are controlled by the majority Meitei community, tribal schools and students are at their mercy. The recent Manipur Board examination in



**Indigenous Tribal Leaders' Forum (ITLF)**  
Conglomerate of Recognised Tribes in Lamka, Outer Manipur

File No: ITLF-PR-202473

Saturday, 13 January 2024

## PRESS RELEASE

The Meitei government in Manipur continues to victimize Kuki-Zo tribals in the state – this time suspending three Education Department officials from the minority community for trying to help tens of thousands of students whose education and careers are in peril because of the ethnic violence.

Since May 3, 2023, tribals have been butchered and driven out of the valley – their homes and churches burned to the ground. Meiteis didn't even spare women, children and the mentally-challenged in what can only be described as an ethnic cleansing exercise.

Since the state education board and offices of all technical institutes are based in Imphal and are controlled by the majority Meitei community, tribal schools and students are at their mercy. The recent Manipur Board examination, in which a majority of tribal Psychology students were failed (some got zero marks), shows to what level Meitei officials will stoop to. For any complaint and other office-related work, tribals can no longer go to Imphal. Schools in tribal areas, therefore, had no choice but to seek affiliation with other school boards.

Under the circumstances, Jangkhohao Haokip (ZEO, Churachandpur), Lhingtinneng (ZEO, Kangpokpi) and L. Taithul (DI of Schools, Samulamlan) were well within their rights and had the moral responsibility to guide schools in tribal areas in seeking CBSE affiliation. Their actions were vindicated when the CBSE approved the requests. It was only after pressure from the Meitei government that CBSE unfortunately withdrew the affiliation.

Suspending these three officials for acting in the interest of students is punitive and morally wrong, and will not be accepted by the Kuki-Zo community. Also, ordering them to shift to Imphal is the height of insensitivity as everyone knows they will be butchered the moment they enter the Meitei-dominated areas.

As for the Meitei community and government – if you don't want us to live together with you, why are you stopping our schools from joining other boards. This shows the majority community is trying to punish us in any way possible.

**Ginza Vualzong,**  
Media & Publicity,  
Indigenous Tribal Leaders' Forum (ITLF)  
Website: <https://www.itlfmediacell.com/>



————— To authenticate ITLF's press releases, please refer to our website <https://itlfmediacell.com> —————

which a majority of tribal Psychology students were failed (some got zero marks) showed to what level Meitei officials will stoop to, it added.

The Tribal Forum claimed that for any complaint and other office-related work, tribals can no longer go to Imphal. "Schools in tribal areas, therefore, had no choice but to seek affiliation with other school boards," it said, adding that the Meitei government's actions were vindicated when the CBSE approved the requests, and it was only after pressure from the government that CBSE unfortunately withdrew the affiliation.

# COTU REFUTES BIREN’S STATEMENT ON TRIBAL STATUS OF KUKI-ZO COMMUNITY; URGES HIM TO PRIORITISE ON RECOVERING LOOTED ARMS, AMMUNITIONS

The Committee on Tribal Unity (CoTU), Kanggui, has vehemently refuted the statement made by N. Biren Singh, the incumbent Chief minister of Manipur, on the tribal status of the Kuki-Zo community at this critical juncture.

The Committee urged N. Biren Singh to prioritize his responsibilities by recovering those looted arms and ammunition from the state armory and rein in his Meitei militias, the Arambai Tenggols from breaching the rules of the law and civility instead.

In a release issued on Saturday, COTU stated that what is even more appalling is that the same Meitei people who were trying to enlist themselves as Scheduled Tribes met a scathing response from the National Commission for SC/ST. “Their failures have led them to demand for scrapping ST enlistment of Kuki-Zo instead. This double standard of the majoritarian Meitei community is a disservice to the constitutional provision of ‘affirmative action’ the founding forefathers had envisioned for an inclusive upliftment of the nation as a whole,” it said.

COTU claimed that the Meiteis’ failure to grab the opportunity was the reason behind this present ethnic conflict which erupted on May 3, 2023.

COTU further clarified that the kindred tribes of all Kuki-Zo communities would not be drawn into the morose agenda of N. Biren Singh, who is hell-bent on dividing the Kuki-Zos on the basis of tribe or clanistic diversity.

Moreover, CoTU said, enlistment or delistment of Scheduled Tribe status of any community is the prerogative of the NCSC/ST and not at the whims of any state or any individual including the CM himself. (As is evident from the response of the Central Government).



**COMMITTEE ON TRIBAL UNITY (COTU)**  
Sadar Hills, Kangpokpi District  
Administrative office : Kangpokpi DHQ  
Email : cotukangpokpi@gmail.com

Ref.No:.....

Date:.....

PRESS COMMUNIQUE:  
13 January 2024

The Committee on Tribal Unity vehemently refutes the statement made by N. Biren Singh, the incumbent Chief Minister of Manipur on the Tribal status of the Kuki-Zo community at this critical juncture. What is even more appalling is that the same Meitei community who were trying to enlist themselves as Scheduled Tribe met a scathing response from the National Commission for SC/ST. Their failures have led them to demand for scrapping ST enlistment of Kuki-Zo instead. This double standard of the majoritarian Meitei community is a disservice to the constitutional provision of ‘affirmative action’ the founding forefathers has envisioned for an inclusive upliftment of the nation as a whole.

Mentioned may be made that their failure to grab the opportunity was the reason behind this present ethnic conflict which has erupted on the 3rd of May 2023.

The Committee on Tribal Unity would like to further clarify that the kindred tribes of all Kuki-Zo communities will not be drawn into the morose agendum of N. Biren Singh, who is hell bent to divide us on our tribe or clanistic diversity. Moreover, enlistment or delistment of Scheduled Tribe status of any community is the prerogative of the NCSC/ST and not at the whims of any state or any individual including the CM himself. (As we all can see the response from the Centre government).

Furthermore, the Committee would like to draw the attention seeking Mahesh Thounaoujam to desist from making himself a clown on his political ambition based on this issue.

Therefore, the Committee would like to urge Chief Minister, N. Biren Singh to prioritize his responsibilities by recovering those looted arms and ammunition from the state armory and rein in his Meitei militias, the Arambai Tenggols from breaching the rules of the law and civility instead. And, as a Chief Minister of a state, he needs to be more diplomatic while reaching out to his neighbours, especially the Kuki-Zo communities for better cordial relationship.

Lamminlun Singsit  
Secretary  
Committee on Tribal Unity

The Committee also drew the attention-seeking Mahesh Thounaoujam to desist from making himself a clown on his political ambition based on this issue.

“As the Chief Minister of a state, Biren needs to be more diplomatic while reaching out to his neighbours, especially the Kuki-Zo communities for better cordial relationship,” it added.

# CONDEMNATIONS FROM STUDENTS' BODIES POUR IN OVER SUSPENSION OF THREE KUKI-ZO OFFICIALS

Condemnations have poured in from Kuki-Zo students' bodies in connection with the suspension of three Kuki-Zo officials for helping the Kuki-Zo students in the midst of state-sponsored ethnic cleansing pogrom.

The Kuki Students' Organisation (Delhi and NCR), Hmar Students' Association (Tuithaphai Joint headquarters) and Zou Sangnaupang have expressed their discontentment over the issue and strongly condemned the action of the state government.

KSO NCR stated that time and again, the Biren Singh-led Government's complicity in the ongoing 'ethnic conflict' in the state is so strikingly conspicuous by the recent revocation of 26 private schools from their hard-earned CBSE affiliation and the subsequent suspension of three Kuki officials of the Department of Education, citing unauthorised No Objection Certificate (NOC) issued by three Kuki Zonal Education Officers (ZEOs).

It is a fact well known that the Kuki people cannot go down to Imphal to get the legal procedure done there for getting the NOC.

Appalled by the belligerent attitude of Chief Minister Biren Singh, the students' body alleged that Biren Singh was manoeuvring in politicising the educational entity. "The State Government is highly condemnable in its sinister design in reshuffling of responsibilities of officials of the Zonal Education Offices of Kangggui (Kangpokpi) and Lamka (Churachandpur) districts," it said.

"This can be at best construed as an act on the part of Biren Singh to create a miff and misunderstanding among the Kuki themselves, and at worst to divide and rule them", it added.

KSOD & NCR made an earnest appeal both to the State and Centre to reconsider the Order No. AS-101/5/2023-EDN(S)EDN(S) dated Imphal, the 12th January, 2024 failing which the student fraternity in the National Capital would launch a massive protest as and when required.

Condemning the suspension, Zou Sangnaupang Pawlpi (ZSP) stated that it would leave no stone unturned until



Office of the  
**KUKI STUDENTS' ORGANISATION DELHI & NCR**

Motto: Learn, Unite, Serve  
Regd. No. 2991 of 1979

Ref. No.: KSOD&NCR/CS/2024/02

Date: 13/01/2024

## Condemnation Statement

New Delhi, the 13<sup>th</sup> of January, 2024

Time and again, the Biren Singh-led Government's complicity in the ongoing 'ethnic conflict' in the state is so strikingly conspicuous by the recent revocation of 26 private schools from their hard-earned CBSE affiliation and the ensuing suspension of 3 (three) Kuki officials of the Department of Education, citing unauthorised **No Objection Certificate (NOC)** issued by three Kuki Zonal Education Officers (ZEOs). It is a fact well known that the Kuki people cannot go down to Imphal to get the legal procedure done there for getting the NOC.

The student communities stand by this statement based on a testimonial of the CM's public speech, declaring once that the conflict going on in the state is rather a "state government versus Kukis".

All appalled by the belligerent attitude of Chief Minister Biren Singh, we would like to reiterate his manoeuvre in politicising the educational entity, and hereby condemn in the strongest term the disciplinary proceedings in suspending Shri Jangkhoao Haokip, ZEO, Churachandpur; Shri Lhingtinneng, ZEO, Kangpokpi; and, Shri L. Taithul, D.I. of Schools, Samulamlan Block of ZEO, Churachandpur.

Moreover, the State Government is highly condemnable in its sinister design in reshuffling of responsibilities of officials of the Zonal Education Offices of Kangggui (Kangpokpi) and Lamka (Churachandpur) districts. This can be at best construed as an act on the part of Biren Singh to create a miff and misunderstanding among the Kuki themselves, and at worst to divide and rule them.

In support of the ultimatums served by Kuki student communities in the state, the Kuki Students' Organisation, Delhi and NCR (KSOD & NCR) also has taken a steely resolve to stand by them.

KSOD & NCR would like to make an earnest appeal both to the State and Centre to reconsider the Order No. **AS-101/5/2023-EDN(S)EDN(S)** dated Imphal, the 12<sup>th</sup> January, 2024 failing which the student fraternity in the National Capital will launch a massive protest as and when required.

Needless to say, education is a subject mentioned in the Concurrent List of the Constitution of India through the 42<sup>nd</sup> Amendment Act of 1976. Therefore, we are positive enough to garner the active intervention of the Centre in this regard.

Issued by:  
**Department of Information and Publicity**  
Kuki Students' Organisation, Delhi & NCR

the disaffiliation and suspension order to the three officials are revoked. It stated that the student bodies with the officials have worked for the best interest of the student fraternity to affiliate six educational institutions which fit the criteria of the Central Board of Secondary in Kuki-Zo dominated districts.

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Dismayed at the disaffiliation of the schools in the month of December in 2023, the ZSP alleged that the issue was just a divulgence with connivance of the Meitei politicians. "The fragrant action of the Manipur Education Department in issuing the suspension orders to the three Kuki-Zo officials has jeopardized those dedicated officials who go extra mile for the welfare of students," it said.

The student body also said that the order of shifting the three Kuki-Zo officials to the headquarter in Imphal was a deliberate strategy to ensnare them into the valley of death.

The Hmar Students' Association Tuithaphai Joint Headquarters, while calling for a prompt and unbiased inquiry, urgently appealed to the Governor to annul the suspension within 48 hours, reinstating the officials and emphasizing the crucial cause of justice.

HSA asserted that the three officials who are devoted to their duties as concerned Educational officials were suspended without valid reasons, marking a truly unfortunate situation. It perceived the suspension as a deliberate attempt to scapegoat the Kuki-Zo for the widespread inefficiencies and corruption prevailing

in all departments of the Manipur Government, predominantly influenced by the Meiteis.

"Such acts reflect a historical pattern of discrimination against the Kukis, accentuated by recent speeches from Meitei CM N Biren Singh, hinting at plans to remove Kukis from the list of Scheduled Tribes," it said, adding that the partisan actions of the Manipur government not only disrupted the efficient functioning of public services but also raised serious questions about due process and fair treatment.

Emphasizing the importance of transparent investigations, adherence to legal procedures, and the protection of individuals' rights, the Association asserted that suspensions should be judiciously measured based on credible evidence and aligned with the principles of justice and fairness.

The HSA Tuithaphai Joint Headquarters also vehemently opposed the reshuffling of responsibilities outlined in the state government's order and pledged a resolute resistance against the implementation of those alterations.

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## 2 INSPECTOR GENERALS OF ASSAM RIFLES DEPLOYED IN MANIPUR, INDO-MYANMAR BORDER PROMOTED

Major General Rajan Sharawat, VSM, IGAR (South) and Major General Vikas Lakhera, SM, IGAR (North) have been approved to the coveted rank of Lt Gen.

Lt Gen PC Nair, Director General of Assam Rifles, and all ranks of Assam Rifles congratulated the officers, saying that the promotion is a testament to their hard work and dedication, according to an update received here on Friday.

Sharawat is the IGAR (South) in Manipur under whom the Assam Rifles has worked tirelessly to quell the ongoing violence in the state, while Lakhera is the IGAR (North) in Kohima, deployed along the Indo-Myanmar border in Nagaland and south Arunachal Pradesh to



thwart illegal cross border and insurgent activities, said the update.

# POROMPAT POLICE GET CUSTODY OF 12 HUIYEN MAMOM MEMBERS IN ANOTHER VIRAL VIDEO CASE

Even as an Imphal West court on Friday remanded 12 Huiyen Mamom members, who were arrested in connection with a viral video, into 14-day judicial custody, Porompat police got the formal arrest of them for another viral video.

Chief Judicial Magistrate, Imphal West Bineshwori Maibam sent them to judicial custody in connection with a viral video where a young woman was beaten up by a group of persons for celebrating the 31st December Night and New Year's Day and consuming alcohol.

During the hearing, it was prayed for remanding them into 14 days of judicial custody to complete the investigation of the case properly and smoothly.

The CJM granted prayer for judicial remand, but another request for formal arrest was put up by Porompat Police Station stating that Huiyen Mamom members had physically assaulted another woman from Khurai AC for calling Huiyen Mamom as "village women" (Lawai Nupi) on January 5. The video of slapping her and demanding her apology was circulated on social media platforms.

An FIR was registered against one Bonny Haobam s/o late Haobam Inaocha a resident of Khurai Ahongei, Irabot Leirak, Imphal East and Huiyen Mamom after a complaint was filed by the victim's paternal aunty Bimola Takhelmayum.

In her complaint, Bimola Takhelmayum accused Bonny of sharing screenshots of a private conversation with the victim to a third party without her consent. It amounts to a violation of her privacy, and none of the events that took place thereafter would have ever occurred if Bonny had not shared screenshots of the conversation with him, she added.

They were booked under sections 319/321/323/340/350/351/355/499/34 of IPC for causing hurt, wrongful confinement, criminal force, assault, or criminal force with intent to dishonour a person, criminal intimidation, defamation, common intention and 66E IT Act.

During the hearing, Assistant Public Prosecutor



Phuritshabam Chaoba Devi submitted that such moral policing has been committed in series to different individuals on different dates, time and places by the members of "Huiyen Mamom". "The accused persons are needed for investigation for finding out the fact of the case and to save the society in bringing in the proper direction. If proper investigations have not taken up timely, they may commit such offences to many innocent persons in future," she said, seeking formal arrest of 12 accused by Porompat police.

After hearing the submission, the CJM allowed the Porompat Police to cause the formal arrest of the 12 accused from the custody of the court.

The arrested Huiyen Mamom members were identified as Heiza Ahanthem (26) d/o Jadumani of Nambol Phoijing Makha Leikai, Pheiroijam Jenita (23) d/o Jila of Khurai Sajor Leikai, Sanjita Lairenlakpam (28) d/o Brajamani of Chingarel Tejpur, Ngangkham Yaisana Chanu (22) d/o Premchand of Khurai Thongam Leikai, Ahanthem Roshini (22) d/o Kanhai of Sawombung Gate, Babita Kangjam (28) d/o Bhupen of Khurai Lairikyengbam Leikai, Moirangthem Sarjubala (21) d/o Inao of Keibi Awang Leikai, Wahengbam Goldpriya (21) d/o Ojit of Itham Nungoi Makha Leikai, Sibani Hijam (24) d/o Bhupendro of Uripok Polem Leikai, Nungshithoi alias Henja Leitanthem (22) d/o Shyam of Waiton Mayai Leikai, Sanjana Thangjam (25) d/o Modhu of Khurai Konsam Leikai and Irom Nirupama (26) d/o Raja of Bamdiyay Mayai Leikai.

# RK SOMENDRO, MAHESHWAR THOUNAOJAM EXPLOIT MANIPUR TURMOIL FOR POLITICAL GAIN AHEAD OF LOK SABHA ELECTIONS

Renowned Manipuri film actor Rajkumar Somendro, popularly known as Kaiku, recently expressed his concerns about the prevailing situation in the state. While addressing a public gathering in the valley, Kaiku emphasized that, as of now, the Meiteis have not initiated a war; instead, they are in a preparatory phase. However, he asserted that the Kukis have already engaged in hostilities against the Meiteis.

Kaiku, who was an unsuccessful candidate in the last MP election and is currently, attempting to establish a political career, made these statements as he spoke at the gathering. He cautioned that a significant conflict is on the horizon, urging every man in the family to be prepared and participate actively. Kaiku lamented the existence of a few Meiteis who seem detached from the impending conflict, focusing solely on enjoying their lives without acknowledging their role in the potential war.

Adding to his remarks, Kaiku appealed to the elders within families to motivate and guide the youth in their efforts to safeguard Manipur. His statements underscore the perceived tensions in the region and the actor's concerns about the looming possibility of a substantial conflict.

Some celebrities exploit social unrest to the fullest extent to launch a career in politics. Individuals like Maheshwar Thounaojam and RK Somendro, known as Kaiku, are using the current turmoil in Manipur to appeal to the Meitei population through their pseudo-nationalistic tactics. As the Lok Sabha election approaches, these aspiring MPs are putting in considerable effort to garner the sympathy of susceptible Meitei voters.



Typically, during conflicts or social unrest, celebrities, including film stars, sports personalities, and social media influencers, are expected to promote peace and serve as ambassadors of unity. However, some lesser-known Meitei celebrities, in their bid to maintain relevance, have resorted to engaging in inexpensive propaganda. Many of them aspire to be considered Meitei heroes without fully grasping the responsibilities associated with being public figures.



**For the powerful, crimes are those that others commit.**

— *Noam Chomsky*



# TELANGANA CM TO JOIN RAHUL'S NYAY YATRA IN MANIPUR ON JAN 14

Telangana Chief Minister A Revanth Reddy, who is currently in the national capital, is expected to join Congress leader Rahul Gandhi's Bharat Jodo Nyay Yatra that will be flagged off in Manipur on January 14.

According to official sources, Reddy may meet AICC leader Sonia Gandhi in Delhi today.

On Sunday morning, Revanth Reddy will leave for Manipur. After participating in the Bharat Jodo Nyay Yatra on its first day, he will return to Delhi and depart for Davos to attend the World Economic Forum summit, sources said.

Reddy is also likely to discuss the issue of nominations for two MLC seats that fell vacant after the resignation of BRS MLAs Kadiyam Srihari and Kaushik Reddy following their election to legislative assembly last month.



The CM will be accompanied by IT and Industries minister D Sridhar Babu and senior officials will be meeting several industry leaders and pitch Telangana as an ideal investment destination.

## THE BUZZ SOCIAL MEDIA

Simon kinson  
@spkinson

Everyone accepts the Anglo- Kuki War. Apart Manipur historians.

### Anglo-Kuki war (1917-1919)

"Imperialist historians have often tried to belittle anti-imperial resistance in colonial India. Historians in Manipur have also used different words like rebellion, revolt, rising, resistance, etc., to refer to the Anglo- Kuki War. There are archival sources both in India and the United Kingdom to corroborate the long drawn out struggle which had proved to be very costly to the British. The Anglo-Kuki war has remained a significant event in the overall anti-British resistance in India."

**Prof Rajib Handique. HoD History, Gauhati University**

8:49 PM · Jan 12, 2024 · 4,945 Views

Paul Koshy  
@Paul\_Koshy

#Manipur Violence and the failure of State Government and the #ModiGovt ranks amongst the top few things for which History shall remember #NarendraModi

PM spoke after 79 days of the first video reports that came up on Social Media of two helpless #Kuki tribal girls being paraded naked and then gang raped by his party supporters from the #Meiteis community..... Exactly for 30 seconds in the Parliament

The entire Nation (except his cabinet, RSS, Meiteis and the Biren Singh Government) were outraged with this.... but Modi wasn't interested.

175 individuals lost their lives, and 45,000 were forced to leave their homes, with the Kuki-Zo tribal community bearing the brunt of the casualties and displacements

4,786 residences were burned, 386 religious sites were destroyed,

4,000 sophisticated weapons and five lakh rounds of ammunition were stolen from armouries and police stations.

Tragically, there are distressing accounts of armed Meitei groups perpetrating sexual violence against many more Kuki-Zo tribal women.

The BJP govt in Manipur has empowered the RSS to incite the Meitei to assert Hindutva politics against religious minorities

#ManipurKukiZoGenocide





## Colonial Divide In Manipur: Tracing The Journey Of State Between 1835 And 1947

Lal Dena & Lal Robul Pudaite

“History shows that the Manipuri\* cannot and will not give the hills an administration of the standard to which they are both entitled. We are under an obligation to the hill tribes to maintain to them a decent administration.”

— Robert Reid, a British colonial administrator in India, who was the Governor of Assam from 1937 to 1942 (\*By Manipuri, he means a Meitei).

Two immutable factors inevitably created a cyst of social incommunicability between the Meiteis, who lived in the valley, and the tribal people, who lived in the hill territory — the Kangleipak kingdom was mainly confined to the valley of about 700 square miles (Sushil Kumar Sharma, 2017:17), and, to add to its exclusivity, it adopted Hinduism at the beginning of the 18th century.

Well aware of this lacuna in the relation between the Meiteis and the hill people, the British colonial rulers intended to create a further division by separating the hill administration on the basic premise that “the hill tribes are not Manipuris and have entirely different customs and languages”.

In the pre-colonial period, the hill people lived as independent and sovereign nations in their respective chiefdoms, free from any external control. Understanding this position, William McCulloch comments thus: “Before the connection of the British government with that of Manipur took place, the latter, not to speak of exerting influence over the tribes, was unable to protect the

inhabitants of the valley from their exaction and blackmail, and even after the conclusion of peace with Burma, and fixation of boundary of Manipur, the majority of the tribes were independent, and known to us little more than by name.” (McCulloch, 1859:73).

A fundamental point of significance of British colonial policy was, on the whole, recognition and legitimisation of the institution of tribal chieftainship and to rule over the common people in accordance with their own customs and traditions. The decision of a village chief was the last and final word on a subject and binding on all members of the tribe. He was the lord of the soil within the territory he occupied, ruled and governed. He collected taxes and levies from his subjects free from any external interference.

To quote Gangmumei Kamei: “The state of Manipur did not interfere in the hill administration and the hill villages were autonomous political entity. The hill tribes were outside the jurisdiction of the administration of the kingdom of Manipur.” (Gangmumei Kamei, 2015.161).

By carefully using the well-known policy of ‘divide and rule’, a policy that played a crucial part in ensuring the stability, indeed, the viability, of nearly every

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colonial rule, the colonial officials thus created a big chasm, first between the Meiteis and the tribal people, and second, between the Kukis and the Nagas. Kukis were used to putting Nagas in check, and vice-versa. They armed one group and disarmed the other as per their whims and pleasure, and the innocent tribal groups, far from realising that they were mere pawns in the hands of a greater power, would go all out at each other without ever thinking who actually shook the jar.

Practically, there was no proper administration in the hill territory before 1891, and the only connection between the colonial officials and the hill people were the lam subedars (revenue officers). The whole hill territory was divided into five divisions known as lam. Five lam subedars were appointed by the political agent for each lam. The five lams were the Mao lam to the north; the Tangkhul lam to the northeast; the Tamu lam to the east; the Moirang lam to the southwest; and the Kabui lam to the west.

Under one lam subedar, seven lambus were again appointed for each division. Under the colonial system, a lambu was an interpreter, a process server and a peon, combined in one. He was primarily a messenger to inform the order and programmes of the government to the chiefs, like road making, construction of bridges, etc, through the enforcement of pothang.

Pothang is of two kinds. Under pothang bekari, the hill people were under compulsion to carry loads—luggages, goods, rations of touring officials—and to construct new bungalows, where and when necessary. Under pothang senkhai, every household was under an obligation to make provision, either in cash or kind—mostly chicken, eggs—to feed the touring officials. Failure on the part of the people to render the pothang services, would invite the harshest of punishments—mostly whipping and caning.

A hill house tax of Rs 3 was imposed on every household in the hill areas. Some Kuki elite were also recruited for this post. The lambus were the eyes and ears of the government. The pothang and collection of house tax was enforced by the lambus through the tribal chiefs and their councilors.

Each time, when the lambus toured the hill areas, they would remain tight-lipped, unless and until a jar of zu

(rice-beer) and sumptuous feast of pork or chicken was offered to them. The lambus made good of their proximity to the high officials, acting as their interpreters, apart from performing multifarious functions. The colonial officials of the state became more and more dependent upon the former for information and advice.

There was little or no scope for direct interaction between the officials and the hill people; that is, between the ruler and the ruled; all modes of contacts were only through the official conduit—the arrogant and imperious lambus. Robert Reid, the governor of Assam, remarks thus: “Between the hill men and the British officers, there intervened a most unsatisfactory intermediary in the shape of the petty Manipur officers termed lambus.” (Robert Reid, 1944)

When Raja Churachand Singh was installed to the gaddi of Manipur on May 15, 1907, the Manipur state durbar was revived to assist him. Raja Churachand Singh was the president of the durbar, and an English officer was the vice-president. No hill representative was appointed in the state durbar. T C Tiankham, the first speaker of the Manipur Legislative Assembly (1948-49), comments thus: “The hill regions never had a representative in the Manipur state durbar; in fact, there was no need for one.

“The reason was that the hills and the valley had never been under one administration. The British had taken the responsibility of governance over the hills separately, even before the durbar came into existence; the hills had been looked after by the political agent.” (T C Tiankham, 1913-1996:49).

The vice-president, who was a European officer, looked after the hill administration at his personal discretion.

The re-organisation of the Manipur state durbar was affected in 1913, wherein the raja relinquished the post of the president of the durbar and a British ICS officer was appointed as the president and who, by dint of holding the president’s office, enjoyed discretionary

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and special powers in the administration of the hill territory under the overall direct and superintendence of the political agent. It is fitting to mention here that there was no mention of the hills in the Manipur state durbar's budget.

The Anglo-Kuki war of 1917-18 (Vijay Chenji, 2022), caught the British Raj completely unaware. The war shook the foundations of British rule in the hill areas. The British had underestimated the industrious and ingenious freedom-loving Kuki-Zos, whose grievances were genuine, that is, the immediate cause for the war being the question of recruitment for the labour corps (during the WW I), which the Kuki-Zos had opposed vigorously.

The British high-handedness and ineptness in mishandling of the issue provided a spark which ignited a fire engulfing the hill areas of the state. To quote Robert Reid again: "The most serious incident in the history of Manipur and its relations with its hill subjects was the Kuki Rebellion, commencing in the closing days of 1917. It cost 28 lakhs of rupees to quell, and in the course of it, many lives were lost."

Reid further stated that the conceited lambus were equally responsible in no small measure for the Kuki Rebellion of 1917-19. An enquiry was made to ascertain the reasons for the war; it was attributed to the misrule of the lambus as the principal reason for the Kukis going to war against the British Raj.

The most significant impact of the Anglo-Kuki war was the immediate overall streamlining and re-organisation of administration, which heralded a new period of direct administration and one of centralised control, which was extended to un-administered areas in the hills.

Consequently, three new sub-divisions were formed — the southwest sub-division with headquarters at Songpi was under the charge of B C Gasper; the northwest division with headquarters at Tamenglong was under William Shaw, and the northeast division with headquarters at Ukhrul was under L L Peter.

All these European officers were directly recruited from amongst the Anglo-Indian officers of the Assam provincial civil services. They were responsible to the political agent and the president of the durbar. But no remarkable improvement in the hill administration

could be seen because of their incompetency and continual absence in their place of duty.

When the new administrative rules were introduced in 1919, the maharaja insisted that he should be involved in the hill administration. But the revised rule simply stated that the maharaja had a right to be consulted in all matters of importance relating to the hill tribes.

In real practice, the maharaja and his durbar had no knowledge of the hill affairs. The president (European officer) of the durbar issued all boundary papers to the tribal chiefs in his own name. The durbar as an institution exercised no direct control over the hill administration throughout the colonial period.

When reform for the management of the hill tribes came up on the principle of federation in 1935, the issue of hill administration continued to be one of the controversial subjects. The political agent, including the governor of Assam and also A C Lothian, the viceroy's special representative, took a firm stand that no change in the internal arrangement be made on behalf of the state for the administration of the hill areas as a consequence of federating. Thus, the maharaja of Manipur, in his letter on July 21, 1939, finally agreed to federate on terms that covered the exclusion of the hills from the state of Manipur.

Towards the end of 1944, the debate on the future administration of the hill areas came up again. In July 1945, a proposal for some form of self-government for the tribal people was raised. However, the proposal did not materialise because of the divergent responses of the hill people.

The Mao and Maram Nagas, under the leadership of A Daiho, harboured the idea of secession and went underground to fight for seceding from the state. The Tangkhuls were emphatic that on no account did they wish to be handed over to the maharaja (Bimal J.Dev & Dilip K.lahiri, 1987:68). The Kukis under the Kuki National Assembly raised a separate Kuki state and the Hmars in Tipaimukh joined the Mizo Union movement for integration with Mizoram.

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On the initiative of T C Tiankham and Teba Kilong, the Khul National Union—comprising Chiru, Gangte, Hmar, Kom, Paite, Pakan (Anal, Lamkang, Monsang, Moyon, Purum and Tarao) and Zou—was formed in 1946. The party, though short-lived, was a strong force to be reckoned with. This was the charged political atmosphere in Manipur just before the Union Jack was pulled down by G P Steward, the last political agent, on August, 14, 1947.

From what has been indicated above, it may be concluded that the hill territory, though included within Manipur, never formed an integral part of the general administration of the state. It was run completely on different lines throughout the historical period. One positive change was the demarcation of tribal lands and the issuance of boundary papers (patta) to the tribal chiefs, thereby ensuring their ownership of land which they occupied for more than 200 years even before the coming of British rulers in Manipur.

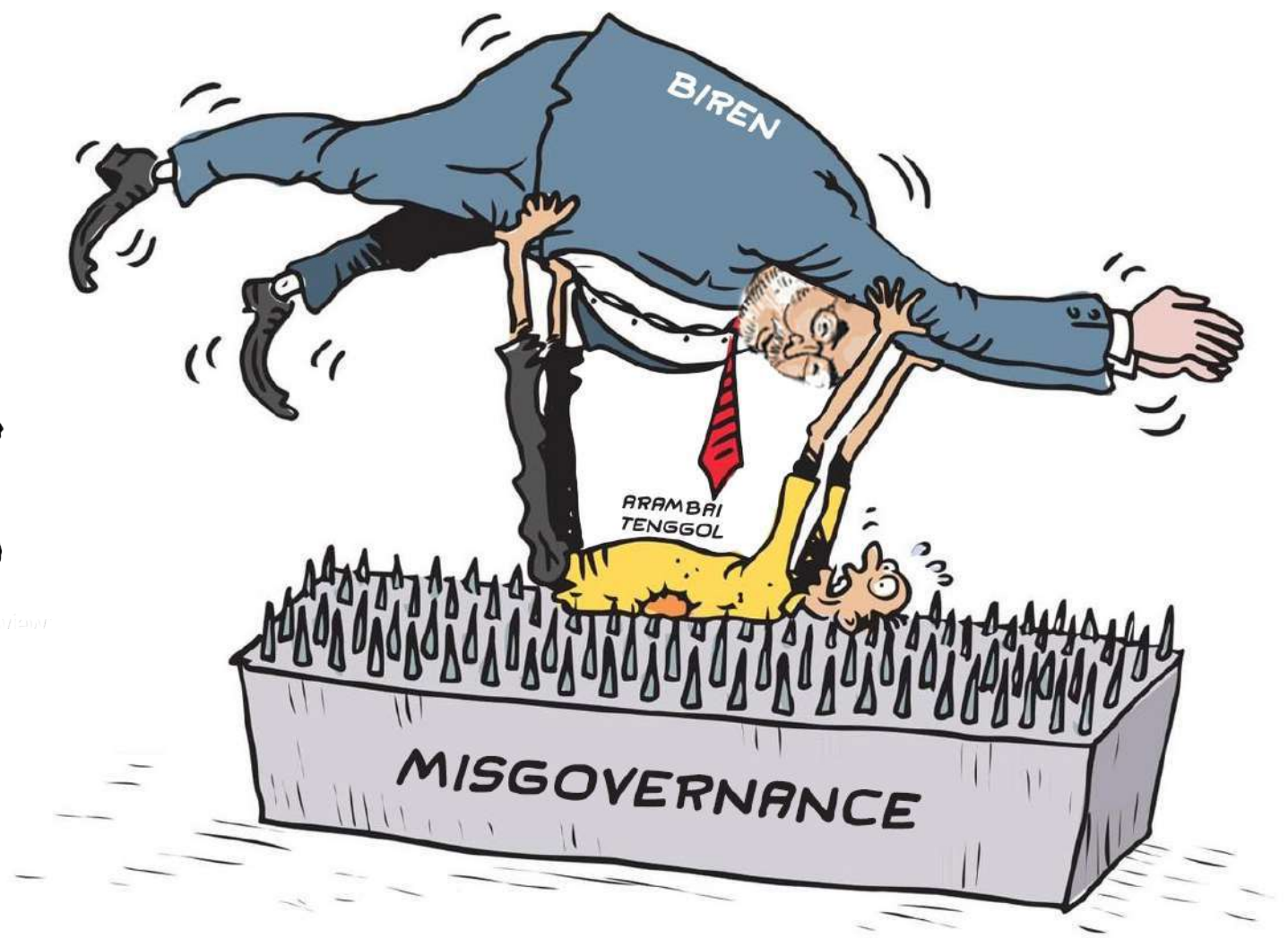
The colonial officials successfully protected the hill areas from direct exploitation by plainspeople by introducing an inner line system, but miserably failed to provide a decent administration as promised. More serious than the administrative and territorial division is the ethnic divide which makes the people, despite their common historical, linguistic and cultural roots, incapable of thinking and acting as one people, one nation!

(Dr Lal Dena is a retired professor of history, Manipur University, Imphal, and an alumni of JNU, New Delhi. Lal Robul Pudaite is senior advisor, Hmar Students' Association, Churachandpur Joint Headquarters. Views expressed are personal.)

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**FROM THE FRONTLINE,  
A LETTER  
TO MY LOVE**

*~Letginmang Singsit*

Wings to fly like a dove if I carry  
Not this letter but I would be there  
This I penned in the bunker unmerry  
Minus of thy warmth presence here.

Pitiful for being absent from you  
Yet proud as for the nation I stand  
Endless and great is my love for you  
Such is my love for our motherland.

Cold winter yet warmth in my heart  
For your love is just enough for me  
Faraway I am in but never the heart  
I live and breathe solely for thee.

To the moon and back I love you  
My passion for you grows each day  
Peaceful and tranquil I was with you  
To hold you in my arms often I pray.

Pray to the Almighty always for me  
For any day I can be mounted above  
Plead this isn't my last letter to thee  
For I wish to write more to you love.

If I ever answer to heaven's call  
There I'll wait and see you, Love.