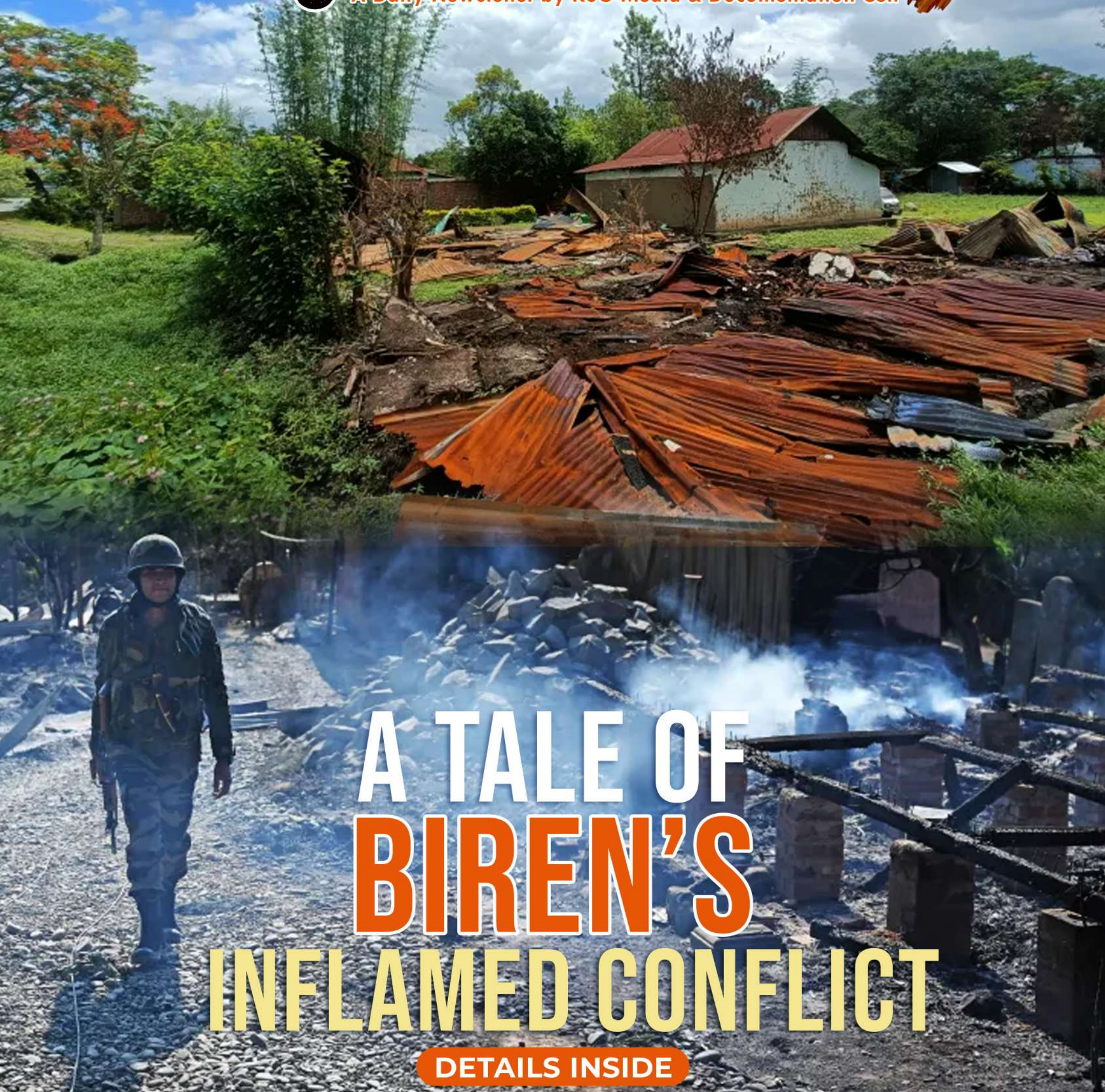


Thingkho *Le* Malcha

A Daily Newsletter by KSO Media & Documentation Cell



A TALE OF BIREN'S INFLAMED CONFLICT

DETAILS INSIDE



KUKI VICTIMS' UPDATE

As on 13.04.2024



173
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.

KUKIS IN CHURACHANDPUR TO VOTE AGAINST BIREN; KANGPOKPI TO ABSTAIN FROM VOTING

The Kuki Inpi Churachandpur today issued a directive asking the people to vote against N. Biren Singh and their alliance partner. It also urged the people to vote unitedly as a show of resentment against the current oppressive regime.

In a Directive issued today, the Kuki Inpi Churachandpur clarified various rumours circulating on Social Media regarding 18th Lok Sabha election that it would be 'Boycotted' or 'NOTA' would be pressed in this ensuing 18th Lok Sabha election.

The Kuki Inpi Churachandpur affirmed that the organization is taking the best decision for the Kuki people which is in line with the resolution taken in the Assembly of Kuki Inpi Manipur (KIM).

The Kuki Inpi Churachandpur also requested all Church leaders to uphold in their prayers so that a party that allows freedom of religions is elected and a party supported by the chief orchestrator of violence Mr. N. Biren Singh is defeated in this election. The directive further urged people to exercise their franchise rights on the day of election.

The Kuki Inpi Churachandpur also asked people to stay vigilant and not fall prey to the deceptive tactics of N. Biren Singh and his cohorts.

Meanwhile, the Kuki Inpi Sadar Hills directed its members of the Kuki community in Sadar Hills to abstain from participating in the upcoming Lok Sabha election.

The Kuki Inpi Sadar Hills, the paramount authority for the Kuki community, issued a powerful proclamation urging all Kuki residents in Sadar Hills to abstain from voting in the upcoming Lok Sabha Election, highlighting their unwavering stance and unity.

The Kuki Inpi Sadar Hills made it clear that their approach to the Lok Sabha Polls isn't about "boycotting" but rather opting to "abstain from voting."



The Kuki Inpi Sadar Hills' Department of Information and Publicity statement stated that given the absence of a candidate from the Kuki-Zo community in the 18th Lok Sabha Election, efforts were made to select a consensus candidate among the four candidates in the outer Manipur PC, however, consensus could not be achieved.

Therefore, in coordination with all stakeholders, acknowledged by the Kuki Inpi Manipur, a unanimous decision was made to abstain from voting in the upcoming election.

There are four candidates for the II-Outer Manipur Parliamentary Constituency including BJP-backed NFP candidate Kachui Timothy Zimik, Congress candidate Alfred Kanngam Arthur, and two Independent candidates, S. Kho John and Dr. Alyson Abonmai.

Sadar Hills Kangpokpi District, boasting more than one lakh electors, is slated to participate in the first phase of elections on April 19 as part of the Outer Manipur parliamentary constituency.

The Kuki Inpi Sadar Hills also instructed all village chiefs and Kuki-Zo individuals to adhere to the joint resolution of abstaining from voting.

KUKI CHIEFS' ASSOCIATION MANIPUR CONDEMNS MERCILESS KILLING OF TWO KUKI VILLAGE VOLUNTEERS

The Kuki Chiefs' Association, Manipur, along with its constituent organizations have jointly condemned, the merciless killing of two Kuki village volunteers by the combined forces of Manipur Police Commandos, UNLF, PLA & the Arambai Tenggol Unit 52 on Monday at Bongjang Village, Island Block, Kangpokpi District, in the strongest term.

The Kuki chiefs alleged that the two village volunteers were killed in the indiscriminate mortar shelling by the Manipur Police Commandos. The lifeless bodies were later handed over to the Arambai Tenggol and VBIGs who have been preying on the Kuki Community since the start of the State sponsored ethnic cleansing pogrom against the Kuki ethnic tribal group, it said.

The Kuki chiefs Association added that the dead bodies were inhumanly dragged around as if they were a trophy and the lifeless bodies were mutilated and dismembered into pieces which are yet to be recovered.

"Such inhumane and barbaric acts of the Meitei radical groups have no place in the civilized societies", said the statement.

The association called upon all right-thinking individuals and organizations to come forward and condemn the 'heinous act' which displayed a 'total disregard to the principles of humanity and international human rights'.

KCAM also questioned the inaction of the Central Forces and other security agencies stationed in the area. Had the Central Forces swoop into action swiftly and timely, the lives of the duo could have been saved, it said.



Ref. No.

Date : 16-04-2024.

PRESS RELEASE

The Kuki Chief Association Manipur along with its Constituting Organization's jointly condemns in the strongest term the merciless killing of 2 (two) Kuki Village Volunteers by combined force of the Manipur Police Commandos, UNLF, PLA & the Arambai Tenggol Unit 52 yesterday at Bongjang Village, Island Block Kangpokpi District. The duo Village Volunteers were killed in the indiscriminate mortar shelling by the Manipur Police Commandos. They are identified as

1. Kamlengsat Lunkim (25yrs) S/o Thangkhomang Lunkim of Bongjang Village
2. Kamminlal Lupheng (23 yrs) S/o Paolet Lupheng, Nongdam Kuki Village

The lifeless bodies which were later handover to the Arambai Tengol and VBIGs who have been preying on the Kuki-Zo Community since the start of this State sponsored ethnic cleansing war against the Kuki-Zo ethnic tribal. The dead bodies were inhumanly dragged around as if they were a trophy and the bodies were mutilated into pieces, which are yet to be recovered.

Such inhuman and barbaric act of the Meitei radical groups have no place in the civilized societies and therefore call upon all right-thinking individuals and organizations to come forward and condemn this heinous act which is a total disregard to humanity and international human rights principles.

This statement would like to question the inaction of the Central Forces and other agencies stationed there. Had the Central Forces swoop into action swiftly and timely the lives of the duo could have been saved. It may also be recalled that had Security Forces maintain a proper Buffer Zone in the periphery area between Kangpokpi District and Imphal East District all this could have been averted and many properties and lives could have been saved. Condemning the negligence of Head of District Administration of both Imphal East and Kangpokpi. The Association held them responsible for escalation of violence and Death in the Kamu Saichang and Moirangpurel area.

With grief we extend our prayer and heartfelt condolences to the bereaved families.

Sd/-
Department of Information & Publicity
KCA-M

"Had security forces maintained a proper Buffer Zone in the periphery area between Kangpokpi District and Imphal East District, all such incidents could have been averted and many properties and lives could have been saved", KCA-M added.

Condemning the negligence of the Heads of the district administration of both Imphal East and Kangpokpi, the association categorically held them responsible for the escalation of violence and death in the Kamu-Saichang and Moirangpurel area.

INCREASING THREATS AGAINST CONGRESS CANDIDATE IN INNER MANIPUR AS RADICAL GROUPS FLEX MUSCLES

Congress Candidate for Inner Manipur Parliamentary Constituency, Dr. Angomcha Bimol Akoijam's election meeting was once again disrupted by unknown armed miscreants today at Kumbi Khuga Leikai in Bishnupur district. The incident occurred at around 3:45 PM.

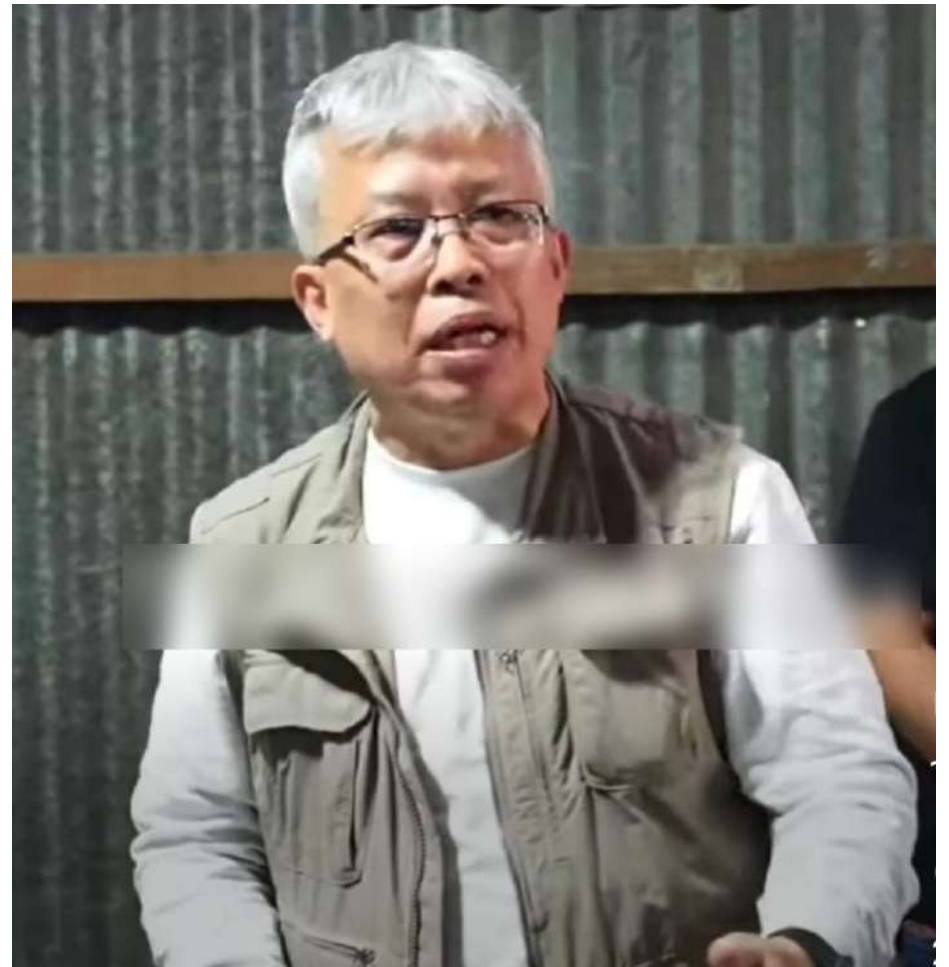
This has been the second time where Congress candidate Bimol Akoijam's public meeting was disrupted with sounds of gunshots.

Last week, Dr. Angomcha Bimol Akoijam's public meeting at Moirang in Bishnupur district was also disrupted with gunshots by unknown armed miscreants.

Reacting to the constant threat he receives, Bimol furiously fumed saying, "They came in my house and threaten to rape my daughter. Gunmen from my own community have threatened me so that I do not contest the election. At present I have no fear that Kuki and non-Manipuris will attack me but it is from the people of own community who have been threatening me."

This incident is not only the first time where Congress candidate in Manipur has been intimidated and threatened with gunshots. The public meetings of Alfred Kanngam Arthur, the Congress candidate for Outer seat, was also disrupted twice with gunshots in the past few weeks.

The Congress candidate running for the Inner Manipur constituency finds himself under increasing threat as radical groups escalate their tactics ahead of the Lok Sabha elections. The Chief Arambai Tenggol, led by Mr. Korounganba Khuman, in the past, has openly intimidated Bimol with an aim to subdue him.



Sources suggest that Arambai Tenggol's cadres could be utilized as muscle power by the ruling dispensation to influence voting outcomes during the election. Their presence on voting day is anticipated to be crucial in swaying results in favor of the ruling party.

Moreover, Pramot Singh, the head of another radical group known as Meitei Leepun, has also joined the fray, openly opposing the Congress candidate's bid for office. Singh has vocally asserted the Meitei community's duty to uphold the political reign of N. Biren Singh, emphasizing the need for protection against perceived threats.

FIVE KUKI CANDIDATES FROM MANIPUR CLEAR CIVIL SERVICES EXAM 2023 AMIDST ETHNIC CONFLICT

As many as five candidates from the Kuki community in Manipur cleared the prestigious Civil Services Examination (CSE) 2023 despite the ethnic conflict that rocked the state since May 3, 2023.

The Union Public Service Commission (UPSC) announced the final results on Tuesday. Among the 1016 candidates recommended for appointment based on their performance, nine candidates from Manipur have secured the coveted positions, five of whom are from the Kuki community, one Naga and three from the Meetei/Meitei community.

The successful candidates from the Kuki community and their All India Rank (AIR) are as follows:

1. Carolyn Chingthianmawi (Rank 543)
2. Chiinzoukim Tungnung (Rank 768)
3. Hatchinghoi Haokip (Rank 898)
4. S Christopher Aimol (Rank 921)
5. Dominic Sominthang Haokip (Rank 994)

The other successful candidates from Manipur include Kshetrimayum Deepi Chanu (Rank 508), Rahul Hijam (Rank 740) Heikrujam Prasanjeet (Rank 757) and M Molightson Kanshouwa (Rank 870). With a total of nine successful candidates, Manipur tops amongst the North Eastern State in the Civil Services Examination 2023, followed by Assam with a total of



CAROLYN CHINGTHIANMAWI
All India Rank-543



CHIINZOUKIM TUNGNUNG
All India Rank-768



HATCHINGHOI HAOKIP
All India Rank-898



S. CHRISTOPHER AIMOL
All India Rank-921



DOMINIC SOMINTHANG HAOKIP
All India Rank-994

seven successful candidates and Nagaland with four successful candidates.

The selected individuals are poised to join esteemed services like the Indian Administrative Service (IAS), Indian Police Service (IPS), and Indian Foreign Service (IFS), among others. Notably, 180 candidates have been selected for IAS, 200 for IPS, and 37 for IFS, showcasing the diverse talents and capabilities demonstrated by the aspirants.



Democracy is not just the right to vote, it is the right to live in dignity.

— Naomi Klein

MEITEI ARMED GROUPS' RAMPANT EXTORTIONS LEAD TO CLOSURE OF MAINLAND INDIANS' BARBER SHOPS IN IMPHAL VALLEY

A couple of weeks after a Meitei man allegedly killed a non-local (mainland Indian) in the Meiteis dominated Bishnupur district, there have been reports of rampant extortions targeting barbers, particularly barbers from mainland Indians leading to closure of Barber shops in Imphal valley.

In connection with the incident, the All India Trade Union Congress, Manipur Unit, and Manipur Barbers' Association briefed the media on Tuesday in Imphal.

Speaking to reporters, AITUC Manipur Unit's General Secretary, L. Sotinkumar said that the working class, especially those living hand to mouth, are suffering immensely due to rampant extortions and intimidation by the Meitei militia groups.

Informing that the drivers' association office has been closed due to extortion, the general secretary added that trade unions, federations and many other working-class bodies are being extorted for money.

"Now, the barbers, who belong to the lowest caste, are being extorted by armed men. Some have even paid amounts ranging from 5 to 10 lakhs and the armed groups have even threatened members of the All India Trade Union Congress", said Sotinkumar.

Sotin questioned the rationale behind the rampant extortion of money from the barbers by armed radical groups in Imphal. The armed gangs threatened the non-local barbers by placing bullets or hand grenades in their shops, which resulted in the closure of many shops, he said.

The general secretary also said, "There are many rich people, politicians, drug lords, and bureaucrats who have exploited Manipur, and they should be the ones from whom money must be demanded".

Kh. Shamungou Singh, Secretary of AITUC supplemented and said that bombs and bullets have been left at the

shops of the leaders of the Barbers' Association which comprised mostly of non-Manipuris. He asserted that such serious cases of extortion are unacceptable and AITUC cannot turn a blind eye on the matter since the association is affiliated to the AITUC.

The secretary said that they have conversed with the law enforcement agencies but to no avail. "AITUC is willing to help and pay for donations", he said, and appealed the armed groups to refrain from further extortion.

Barbers' Association General Secretary, Pappu Thakur, and Treasurer Om Prakash Thakur were also present during the press meet.

Let alone extortions and monetary demands, there are many incidents wherein the non-locals in Manipur, especially in the Meitei dominated areas, are harassed, kidnapped or even killed by the Meitei militants since the past many years.

As per the Chief Minister of Manipur, N. Biren Singh, 20 non-locals were killed within 6 years in Manipur. The chief minister of Manipur in July 2022 had made a statement in the state assembly stating that 20 non-locals have been killed in Manipur since 2017. He said that most of the attacks were carried out during the election seasons.

Recently, in the first week of April this year, one Meitei shot and killed a non-local in Bishnupur district over wages. The deceased Suresh Sahu of Shantipur, Bishnupur, was reportedly killed by Shijagurumayum Biren Sharma.

As per data provided by South Asia Terrorism Portal, 104 non-locals were killed by militants from 2001 to 2018 alone while injuring many others.

MANIPUR GOVT TRANSFERS CHURACHANDPUR SP

The Manipur government transferred the Churachandpur Superintendent of Police Shivanand Surve, an official said on Tuesday.

The Department of Personnel and Administrative Reforms in an order dated April 15 ordered the transfer the Shivanand Surve as the SP of Churachandpur and posted him as senior staff officer to the DGP, the official said.

Shaikh Mohd Zaib Zakir the Additional SP (Law and Order) of Churachandpur district has been given duties as SP of the district, the order said.

Surve in February had suspended a head constable Siamlalpaul for allegedly being with armed miscreants in a purported video that went viral. The suspension of the head constable had triggered mob violence in



Churachandpur district in which two persons were killed in firing by security personnel.

Surve was also asked by the Indigenous Tribal Leaders Forum to leave the district within 24 hours.



Many partially burnt or vandalised properties of Kukis in Imphal now bear an Arambai Tenggol unit number on their gate.

Read @jeegujs's latest report from #Manipur, to understand why the Biren Singh government gives a free hand to #ArambaiTenggol.
caravanmagazine.in/conflict/biren...



5:10 pm · 16 Apr 24 · 4,803 Views



Sushant Singh
@SushantSin

Follow

So restoring peace in Manipur was not Modi's priority for the past 11 months, when he could go for random events to various places globally but couldn't find a moment to visit strife-torn Manipur.

PM's priority to restore peace in Manipur: Shah

Prawesh Lama and
Utpal Parashar

letters@hindustantimes.com

IMPHAL/GUWAHATI: The priority of the next government at the Centre under Prime Minister Narendra Modi would be to restore peace in strife-torn Manipur through discussions and without dividing the state, Union home minister Amit Shah said on Monday.

Addressing an election meeting in Imphal to drum up support for the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) candidate from Inner Manipur Lok Sabha seat, Basanta Kumar Singh, Shah said the upcoming polls is between forces trying to break Manipur and those keeping it united.

"I want to tell people residing in the (Imphal) valley and hills of Manipur that in the coming days, Narendra Modi's priority is to bring peace to the state by talking to all sides and keeping the state united," Shah said during his second visit to Manipur since violence broke out on May 3 last year.

Manipur has been roiled by ethnic clashes between the Meiteis, who are dominant in Imphal Valley, and Kukis, who are in



Amit Shah

majority in some hill districts, since May last year. The violence has claimed 221 lives and displaced around 50,000.

Hours before Shah landed in the state capital, security was heightened across Imphal, with police and paramilitary forces taking over the streets and snipers deployed on buildings near the rally venue at Hapa Kangjibung public ground. It was necessitated as just two days ago (April 13), two men were killed and their bodies mutilated in a gunfight at a village, around 32 km from Imphal.

"There was no development in Manipur during the past Congress rule. In the past six years, the BJP-led government in the state tried to change that, but one incident of ethnic clashes happened. I want to assure all that in the coming days, we will talk to all sides and estab-

lish peace without compromising on the state's integrity," Shah said. "This is the resolve of the Narendra Modi government."

Shah accused the previous Congress governments at the Centre and state of ignoring Manipur. "This selection is not between BJP and Congress, but between those who want to divide Manipur and those who want to keep the state united," he said. "The Congress speaks of division wherever it goes. It was responsible for the country getting divided (into India and Pakistan)."

Reacting to the minister's speech, Manipur Congress working president K. Devbrata said: "During his visit to Manipur in June last year, Shah had promised to return with a solution within 10 days to address the ongoing crisis, but that didn't happen."

(With inputs from Sobhapal Sarma)



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8:40 am · 16 Apr 24 · 2,144 Views



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**NEWS ANALYSIS****Union Home Minister Amit Shah was in Manipur, But Not a Single Word on Phailengmol Area Incident Three Days Ago**

The Union Home Minister, Shri Amit Shah visited Manipur for an election campaign for the BJP candidate Mr. Thounaojam Basanta Kumar for the I-Inner Manipur parliamentary constituency on Monday.

During his short visit, he spoke at length in Hindi, a language only few people follow since Hindi movies and songs have been banned by Meitei terrorists [VBIGs] for decades. However, there was no mention of what happened in the Phailengmol Area on Saturday, or during the initial days of the ongoing violence.

The Phailengmol Area of Saikul Sub-division in Kangpokpi district, officially inaugurated as Island sub-division in 2016, has close to 15 Kuki villages, all of which were burnt down in May last year by Meitei terrorists and mobs with the unqualified support from state forces, and hence were abandoned for months.

It is this area that not only lost many lives but also witnessed the sexual assault and naked parade of two Kuki women by a Meitei mob in May of last year, a video of which shocked the world in July.

According to a noted journalist, in the recent past, many Kuki villages in this area have been trespassed

by Meitei groups for various activities including illegal quarrying and sandmining. In one such village called Bongjang, the villagers had returned to occupy their land and set up two bunkers at the edges of their village with a total of 15 of them keeping guard to avoid outsiders from entering.

The same journalist argued that, technically speaking, guarding buffer zones such as this area is the responsibility of the central forces as Amit Shah had promised during his visit to Manipur last year. However, since the Central forces are unable to guard the whole stretch of land, in this case the entire Island Block section are off-limits, the villagers had to volunteer to guard their lands as anything can happen from the Valley-side.

The attempt by the villagers to return to their villages had often led to confrontation with the nearby Meitei villagers, with gunshots being exchanged whenever Meitei groups attempted to trespass into the area, which finally resulted into a full-blown gunfight including heavy bombing from the Central Forces on Saturday resulting to the death of two Kuki village guards.

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The volunteers who escaped the deadly bombing on Saturday said that they first spotted drones flying above their village in the past one week. This was followed by a few gunshots exchanged on April 12, but it was in the early morning of the 13th that the Kuki village volunteers came under heavy attack from Moirangpurel side, a nearby Meitei village. It may be noted that these Meitei areas are the stronghold for various VBIGs. It is also a place where the local MLA Mr. Th. Shyamkumar, who is linked to various armed groups has a huge support as he also owned a plot of land there. It may also be recalled here that it was under the leadership of this particular MLA and the Meira Paibis that a mob forcefully snatched away 12 KYKL terrorists from the custody of the Indian Army.

Earlier, videos of Arambai Tenggol terrorists moving towards Moirangpurel were also uploaded on facebook pages, one of which says, 'Go to Moirangpurel'.

Going back to the unfortunate incident, exchange of fire continued for a couple of hours before the bunkers where the Kuki volunteers were at, came under heavy attack with bombs and explosives, allegedly by the Bihar Regiment. It may be noted that, the Bihar Regiment has come to this area just recently and one thing they suspiciously did was their meeting with the area leaders of the Arambai Tenggol sometime about a month ago. Since the area is dominated by VBIGs and powerful people like Shyamkumar, the officials of the Regiment might have been bribed by the Meiteis there. Otherwise, the usually neutral central forces such as the Army will never take sides openly and stain the sanctity of the Indian Army which has been doing a commendable job till date.

Unfortunately, two Kuki village volunteers were left to die on the spot from the alleged bombing by the Bihar Regiment as all the other village guards had scattered due to fear for their lives. If the Kuki volunteers had

known that their bunkers would be a target for the bombing by Bihar Regiment, they would have abandoned the place for good.

Soon after the incident, videos and images began to emerge wherein the bodies of the two village guards were stabbed, dragged around and chopped to pieces. Many such videos and images are now viral on social media platforms which are too disturbing to even share due to its graphic content. However, they are being shared with congratulatory messages by members of the Arambai Tenggol and the Meitei public without any sign of remorse.

The continued dehumanisation of the Kuki community has happened at the behest of the BJP at the centre and state, who to this day outrightly refused to acknowledge the scale of what's happening in the state.

All this is happening during an election season and yet it is nowhere seen on the news headlines. How could such mutilation and dismemberment of human bodies not worth for news channels, or to us as human beings? Since most of the national media are now owned by the BJP and their sympathisers, only those news that garner votes for the party gets the prime time show.

Also how could a Union Home Minister, visit the state, spoke for an hour, but not utter a single word about what happened in the state three days ago? How is it even possible that even the Congress, which is the main opposition party in the state and the country, too, refused to even condemn such barbarity?

And here we are, talking about the elections for the largest democracy in the World. What a Joke!

DEBUNKING THE LIES

NEWS ANALYSIS

Kukis are Not Patients of Stockholm Syndrome, Mr Biren



In the last 11 months, the reciprocity of Biren's skin thickness about the injustice faced by the Kukis has risen to the point that, if there existed wonders of the world based on hypocrisy and shamelessness, Biren would have easily clinched the first spot.

From a man who is rampantly abusing and depriving the Kukis of their fundamental and constitutional rights, a man who turns blind to the gross human rights violations faced by the Kukis, it's ironic for the Kukis that the man who is an enabler of their grievances and injustice thinks the victims will support him to keep Manipur integrity intact and will vote for a party that fights under his leadership. His out-of-reality statement makes one question as to whether Biren is high on drugs. Or are drugs his solace to escape from reality? Or is he just a devil incarnated as human? A normal and decent human being will not have the calibre to act like "All is well" after inflicting upon them the cruellest and most gruesome suffering unless one is a psychotic serial killer and an abusive human.

As a tech-savvy CM, often resorting to verbal conflict with his netizens, one of his victims whose arrest he had ordered due to a social media post the citizen had made, met a tragic end at a police station at the hands of Meitei mobs. If due to his old age and memory issue he is incapable of remembering things, he should have seen and at least remembered the mutilated bodies of two Kuki men and the feasting on it by Meiteis two days ago. If after witnessing the savageness and

cruelty of Arambai Tenggols and the Meitei public celebrating the act, he can still talk about the Kukis and on behalf of the Kukis, Mr Biren's view on Kukis needs a proper exploration. Does he view the Kuki as a patient of Stockholm syndrome or are they a robot to them?

Even staunch supporters of Arambai Tenggol and Meiteis mob atrocities and cruelty against the Kukis knew a genocide pogrom of such a large scale couldn't be executed without the support and blessing of the Government in power in the state. Otherwise, a sovereign nation will never allow for the normal operation of Genocide culprits and its land as a ground for execution of the pogrom to ethnically cleanse a section of its citizens who belong to a particular community. Biren discarded and alienated the Kukis from Manipur, thus he has no right nor any authority to talk about or on their behalf.

To justify the terrorist, anti-national and unlawful activities of Arambai Tenggol and Meira Paibis, alongside giving himself the clean sheet on his failure, inefficiencies and his concurrence to the crime, he spearheaded the defamation pogrom against the Kukis to brand them as Illegal immigrants, poppy planters and narco-terrorists. If

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there is one thing Biren will be known for by history in this ongoing pogrom to ethnically cleanse the Kukis, it will be his consistency and loyalty to remain as Meitei chief minister alone. He acts as the powerhouse to protect and aid the Arambai Tenggol and Meira Paibis in executing the pogrom.

On the dreadful night of 3rd May, Kukis were specifically targeted on the roads, houses, hospitals, workplaces, government quarters, their localities and even the University was not spared. Many were burned to death alive, gang-raped, murdered, their bodies mutilated and physically assaulted, and they were not safe even inside the central security force vehicles. Rather than containing the atrocities and heinous crimes against the Kukis, the fire spread further outside the capital city. Kuki villagers in the periphery of the capital city met the same fate as Kukis from Imphal from mobs led by armed men adorned in Manipur police uniforms and vehicles. Biren let the situation unfurl freely on the whims and fancies of the terrorist outfit Arambai tenggol and mobs led by Meira Paibis. The CM muted off the cries and suffering of the Kukis from the reach of his office and emptied the fuel of his vehicles for his visit to the Kukis. Biren alienated and discarded Kukis from Manipur first, and the Kukis by default had to accept the reality. Manipur is thus partitioned into two; areas inhabited by the Kuki and Hell on Earth for the Kukis in Manipur.

That moment when he failed to protect Kukis even in the capital city of Imphal and let the pogrom spread all over Kuki inhabited villages which were in proximity to Meitei's localities, also to his Ministers and constitutional authorities belonging to the Kuki community, and surrendered them to savagery and barbarism at the hands of Meitei mobs spearheaded by his own Arambai Tenggol, Manipur was already partitioned into two with the buffer zone acting as the line of separation. Thus neither Biren nor the Meitei public in general have the right to talk about the integrity of Manipur after the gross human rights violations they have inflicted upon the Kukis, and with the ongoing psychological, physical and emotionally cruel and heinous atrocities they continue to execute against them.

They should know Kukis are not suffering from Alzheimer's disease, nor do they have short-term memory, nor are they Stockholm syndrome patients. Kukis are not robots either who operate on the whims and fancies of their owners. Kukis are normal humans with emotions and rationality. Thus, they like any normal human being with conscience in a democracy will demand the justice and dignity they deserve in a democratic country. Like all mothers, our mother India will be just unto them.

LAUNCHING SOON

This treatise is being prepared and published to unravel the lies and perfidy of our adversaries and put in perspective the authentic truth so that it stands as a testimony of the genocide that is being perpetrated on us and our people With the hope and expectation that the perpetrators of these reprehensible crimes are brought to justice; and ignite a glimmer of solace and consolation to our indignant souls.



FEATURED ARTICLE

Manipur's BJP CM Inflamed Conflict: Assam Rifles Report on India Violence

Angana Chakrabarti

On Christmas Eve, it was eerily calm inside a makeshift bunker with piles of gunny bags and a tin roof. Hunkered inside and clutching their single-barrelled rifles, 19-year-old Chonminlal Kipgen and 26-year-old Paolal Kipgen from the predominantly Christian Kuki-Zo community looked out and scoured the hills of Kangpokpi district for armed fighters from the rival Meitei community.

They said they were village volunteers – civilians who had taken up arms to defend their homes.

Not so far away in Manipur's capital, Imphal, the majority-Meitei community had similarly muted celebrations during their most cherished festival, Ningol Chakouba, in early November.

For the past 11 months, the two communities in India's northeastern state of Manipur have been locked in what is arguably the country's longest-running ethnic conflict in the 21st century under the watch of a federal government headed by Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

The conflict has killed 219 people, injured 1,100 and displaced 60,000. It has revived an array of armed groups, sweeping up men and boys as recruits from both communities. On Saturday, two Kuki-Zo "village volunteers" were killed and their bodies allegedly mutilated in Manipur's Kangpokpi district. In their press release, tribal groups accused "central security forces,

who aided Meitei militants" of being behind the killings.

The conflict is frequently oversimplified as a struggle between the Hindu Meitei and Christian Kuki-Zo communities, mirroring the religious polarisation seen in communal conflicts and assaults on religious minorities in various parts of India. While the Kuki-Zo communities are almost entirely Christian, the Meitei community predominantly follows a syncretic form of Hinduism and their own Indigenous faith system, called Sanamahism. A smaller number of Meitei people also follow Christianity and Islam.

But an assessment prepared by Assam Rifles officials in Manipur highlighted a different set of factors that are unique to the conflict in Manipur. The Assam Rifles is the federal government's paramilitary force with a long and controversial history in the state. It is the oldest paramilitary force in the country and shoulders the responsibility of maintaining law and order in the northeast along with the army.

The Reporters' Collective (TRC) reviewed the assessment, made in a PowerPoint presentation,

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late in 2023. The officers who showed the presentation wished to remain anonymous. They took me through the presentation, which was in sync with the views one of the officers shared with me while explaining the reasons behind the Manipur conflict.

The presentation put part of the blame on the state government, headed by Chief Minister N Biren Singh, a member of Modi's Hindu nationalist Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), and his "political authoritarianism and ambition".

It is the first candid assessment from a federal government agency that has made it into the public domain.

It is significant because Modi this month, in the run-up to a general election, had asserted that the federal government's timely intervention had led to a "marked improvement in the situation" in Manipur. This was one of the few times that the prime minister had spoken of the conflict. Meanwhile, the federal home affairs minister has placed his faith in the chief minister's ability to bring peace, which so far has not provided a resolution. The state's two seats in India's lower house of parliament vote on April 19 and April 26, in the first two phases of the national elections.

The assessment by the Assam Rifles listed causes of the conflict as determined by officers in the thick of the violence.

It highlighted the impact of "illegal immigrants" from neighbouring Myanmar, the consequent demand for a national register of citizens to reduce migration and the demand for Kukiland.

Kukiland is a separate administrative unit that the political and armed Kuki leadership wants cleaved out of Manipur. The demand for Kukiland has been revived during the ethnic conflict.

Additionally, the presentation asserted that armed groups from the Meitei community are equipping people with weapons, and the Kuki community's armed groups are backing "volunteers".

All of this has intensified tensions and contradicted attempts by both communities' leaders to present the conflict as common citizens volunteering for self-defence against the other community.

TRC could not independently verify if the views in the presentation are endorsed by the Assam Rifles as an organisation. Detailed questions were sent to the paramilitary force's official spokesperson.

Initially, a spokesperson said the Assam Rifles would not be able to respond to something that was "hearsay".

In a follow-up email, the Assam Rifles said it would "respectfully decline to engage in discussions regarding speculative or unverified matters. As a professional institution, we focus on our core duties and responsibilities, and we have no further comments on this issue at this time." Later, it asked for a copy of the presentation.

The Assam Rifles did not respond to TRC's follow-up emails asking if it held the views reflected in the presentation.

Queries to the Ministry of Home Affairs and the Manipur chief minister's office remain unanswered.

The chief minister's role

The immediate trigger for the violence was a demand by the dominant Meitei community for Scheduled Tribe status, a form of affirmative action granting quotas of government jobs and college admissions. It was opposed by other tribal groups, including those from the Kuki-Zo community.

But in the presentation, Assam Rifles officials pointed to policies of the chief minister that they believed fed the animosity between the communities. It noted Singh's "hard stance" on the "war on drugs" and "vocal social media dissent", among other things, for inflaming the conflict.

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The presentation accused Singh of creating divisions between communities in the state's campaign to stop drugs from being manufactured, traded and sold in Manipur. His forceful drive against the cultivation of poppies, grown in hilly regions of the state bordering Myanmar, drove home the impression that he is targeting Kukis.

The presentation also cited "state forces' tacit support" of the violence and the "dismemberment of law-and-order machinery".

Another factor in the conflict, the presentation noted, is "Meitei Revivalism". Revivalism refers to the long history of the Meitei community aspiring to revert to its identity before the advent of Hinduism in the 18th century and later the merger of Manipur into India in 1949. The campaign led to a revival of Sanamahism in the 1930s and fuelled the armed movements subsequently.

The presentation lists Meitei Leepun and Arambai Tenggol, two Meitei organisations, as among the factors that has fuelled the conflict.

Arambai Tenggol was formed in 2020 "under the aegis of the titular king of Manipur and BJP Member of Parliament Leishemba Sanajaoba", a police officer told me.

The Tenggol was initially formed as a sociocultural organisation focused on the revival of Sanamahi culture and later took up arms. It earned a more vigilante-like reputation in April last year after it broke into the house of a Meitei Christian pastor who had allegedly insulted the Sanamahism faith.

The Arambai Tenggol is helmed by Tyson Ngangbam, who goes by the pseudonym "Korounganba Khuman". (Korounganba is a common Meitei name that means "sunshine" while Khuman is the name of a clan.)

TRC sent questions to Ngangbam through his social media account, which he has used during the conflict. The report will be updated if he responds.

In January, in a show of strength, Arambai Tenggol summoned 37 members of Manipur's Legislative Assembly and two members of parliament from the state, including RK Ranjan Singh, the federal minister of state for external affairs and education, for a meeting at Kangla Fort, the palace of the Meitei kings in the heart of Imphal. It included lawmakers from the Meitei community across party lines.

Ngangbam spelled out the group's demands, including updating the National Register of Citizens, a process by which the Indian government hopes to identify and exclude undocumented migrants.

The group also demanded abrogation of the Suspension of Operation – a peace agreement – with the Kuki-Zo armed groups, the relocation of refugees from Myanmar to the neighbouring state of Mizoram, border fencing along the Indo-Myanmar border, the withdrawal of the Assam Rifles from Manipur and the delisting of "illegal migrants" from the Scheduled Tribes list – a move that would exclude Kuki-Zo people from Myanmar from accessing the Indian government's affirmative action policies. The lawmakers committed to back the demands.

Meitei Leepun, which is also of recent origin, is perceived as influenced by the ideology of Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS), the fountainhead of a spectrum of hardline Hindu organisations, including the BJP. The leader of Meitei Leepun openly professes allegiance to the state's chief minister and BJP leader Biren Singh, a Meitei.

Both Meitei Leepun and Arambai Tenggol face accusations from Kuki leaders of spearheading assaults by the Meitei community against their people. While Arambai Tenggol leans towards a stronger Meitei nationalist stance distinct from Hinduism, Meitei Leepun aligns with the Hindutva campaign led by the RSS and BJP.

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A Meitei Leepun leader, Pramot Singh, told me: “We [the Meiteis] are followers of sanatana dharma. ... If Meitei becomes extinct, the last outpost of sanatana dharma in Manipur is gone in the same manner Kashmiri Pandits are gone.”

Pramot Singh was referring to an upper-caste Brahmin group that lived in Kashmir but was forced to flee in the 1990s as they faced persecution and threats of violence by Kashmiri armed groups.

The Revivalists, in contrast, see Meiteis as distinct from the rest of India with their own cultural and religious identity and an erstwhile Manipuri kingdom called Kangleipak, which was merged by coercion into India in 1949.

The Assam Rifles presentation was silent on the political and business underpinnings of the conflict, the role of the federal government – under the BJP – and the Assam Rifles’ own failings and alleged bias.

According to the Assam Rifles presentation, the conflict is divided into three phases: “initiate”, “mutate” and “stalemate”. It laid out how the nature and character of the violence have changed through these stages.

My reporting over six months helped draw out details of what the paramilitary force’s presentation mentioned and what it left out.

The initiation

The embers of the current conflict – Biren Singh’s alleged political authoritarianism, hard stance on poppy cultivation, undocumented immigration, demand for Kukiland and Meitei Revivalism – have long smouldered.

But in April last year came the spark that ignited the simmering tension. This period was referred to by the Assam Rifles presentation as “initiate”.

That month, the Manipur High Court had asked the state government to consider petitions for including the Meitei community in the list of Scheduled Tribes – the constitutional provision that in the case of Manipur includes property ownership in the hilly areas dominated

by Kukis. The Manipur Land Revenue and Land Reforms Act of 1960 allows only Scheduled Tribes to buy land in the hill areas.

Heeding a call by the All Tribal Students’ Union Manipur, the leading tribal civil society organisation in Manipur, for a “solidarity march” in the hill districts where tribal communities dominate, rallies were held on May 3 in Senapati, Ukhrul, Kangpokpi, Tamenglong, Churachandpur, Chandel and Tengnoupal.

As the march was winding up in the town of Churachandpur, news spread that a tyre had been set on fire in front of the Anglo-Kuki Centenary Gate, which was built to commemorate the 1917-1919 Kuki uprising against the British.

Subsequently, a group of young people approached the gate wielding weapons. Soon, word spread, suggesting that “militants” were provoking the crowd, Outlook magazine reported. Within a couple of hours, rumours spread through the state that Kuki mobs were vandalising Meitei houses.

The Assam Rifles officers’ presentation said the period of conflict starting May 3 was characterised by “high intensity riots”, “selective targeting” and it was “orchestrated and led by militias”.

Mobs ran amok in the towns, particularly in Imphal, located in the valley with a predominantly Meitei population.

“On the night of May 3 at 8pm, people wearing black shirts attacked us. We fired blanks, which forced them to retreat but just for some time,” said 43-year-old L Ngampao Khongsai, who had been living in Imphal’s Khongsai Veng area, a predominantly Kuki-Zo area.

According to Khongsai, a Kuki-Zo, the mob continued to attack the neighbourhood despite pushback from the security forces. “They would be saying that Kuki should be killed and threw stones.”

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Khongsai fled with his family and hid at a nearby school. Like thousands of others from the valley, he ran and made his way to the Kuki-Zo-dominated Churachandpur district.

In the hill areas and closer to the foothills, mobs attacked Meitei neighbourhoods. A pregnant Warepam Rameshwori was forced to flee her village. “Our village is at the foothills in Tronglaobi Maning Leikai [in Bishnupur district] surrounded by Kuki villages. On May 3, the firing started. ... [The Kukis] had sophisticated weapons and started firing at us, and we didn’t have any weapons to defend, so we ran away from there and found shelter at a relative’s home,” she said.

Seventy-nine Kuki-Zo and 18 Meitei individuals lost their lives from May 3 to May 23, according to an Assam Rifles estimate. This period also recorded a wave of attacks and looting of arms from police stations. According to the Assam Rifle assessment, 5,668 weapons were looted.

“[The state government] allowed the looting of arms. I mean, it is obvious because it is impossible for people to just enter the police stations and take out arms,” a retired police officer familiar with the security and intelligence operations in the region told me.

“So the Meitei civilians and the rebel groups had gotten weapons and started maintaining vigilance in the town. ... In response, the other side felt that the SoO [Suspension of Operations] arms people should get out and distribute weapons amongst the Kukis,” he said.

The Suspension of Operations is the peace agreement signed among Kuki-Zo armed groups, the federal government and the Manipur government. The SoO requires Kuki-Zo militias to stay in designated camps and all their weapons be kept in the camp’s central armoury under the supervision of the state.

“The divide was complete, and that was the stage in the beginning when the political leadership should have cracked down very, very heavily,” the officer said.

That did not happen. The conflict spread and mutated, the Assam Rifles presentation noted.

More than 8,000 reports

TRC tried to redraw the initial period of the conflict by analysing 8,169 first information reports (FIRs) – 5,818 were filed in May and 2,351 in June.

An FIR is the first complaint filed either by citizens or police, which the police then have to investigate to determine whether a crime has been committed.

On May 3, an FIR was filed recording the initial trigger of the violence between the two communities. According to the FIR filed by the authorities: “A huge [number] of Kuki and Meitei youths numbering about 1,500 clashed among each other and vandalised and burned down many houses of both communities at Torbung Bangla. In that, many houses numbering about 300 houses and some private vehicles were also burnt down by the rioters. The police personnel fire[d] some rounds of tear gas smoke bombs and other ammunition to disperse the mob.”

The looting of weapons was reported as starting on May 4 with the first registered incident being reported at Manipur Police Training College in Imphal. According to the FIR, “The large mob overpowered the sentry and broke the lock of arm kote room and looted a large number of arms and ammunitions [sic],” including automatic rifles – 157 INSAS rifles, 54 SLR rifles and AK-47 rifles, among others. The looting of weapons continued until May 31, as recorded in these 8,169 FIRs.

In the first two months of the conflict, 7,831 cases of vandalism and incidents in which residents were forced to flee were reported. In addition, 189 cases of killings, assaults – including sexual assault – bodily harm and missing persons, and 79 cases of mass looting of weapons were also recorded.

Multiple FIRs were nearly identical or similar. For instance, on May 10, 76 FIRs filed in the Sagolmang police station in Imphal East District included a similar complaint: “Some unknown persons

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holding arms and deadly weapons numbering about 1,000 suspected to be Kuki Community from different villages entered at [name of place] and damaged the properties as well as burnt the house.” The only differences in the reports were the place names and the lists of damaged items.

A similar trend was seen in the police complaints filed by the opposing Kuki-Zo side.

“If a village with 40 households was burnt, there would be 40 complaints,” a second police officer said on the condition of anonymity. According to him, the “identical” cases were all combined to help the inquiry being led by a special investigative team.

The second phase

According to the Assam Rifles presentation, the character of the conflict began to change at the end of May.

This is the time when federal Home Minister Amit Shah made a four-day trip to Manipur to stitch up a truce. By then, the federal government, in an unprecedented move, had appointed a federal officer in charge of all security and policing operations in the state, bringing the state police and the federal paramilitary and army under one command.

The federal government may dismiss a state government and take over control of the state’s functions if it believes “the constitutional machinery” has failed. The constitution also requires the federal government to protect a “state against external aggression and internal disturbance”.

But in this case, the federal government kept its faith in the state government and did not invoke either of these constitutional provisions.

Again unprecedented, the government sought to achieve a truce by drawing up an ethnic boundary, calling it a buffer zone, dividing the Kuki-Zo from Meitei-dominated areas and enforcing this boundary through its armed forces.

Shah’s visit and the strategy to impose a unified federal policing command and the buffer zone failed.

The violence abated in the main Kuki-Zo or Meitei-dominated towns, but it shifted to rural areas. These rural areas, stretching from the Imphal Valley to the Kuki-dominated hills, are made up of small hamlets, villages and townships where Meitei and Kuki people have traditionally lived next to each other.

Now, the villages of both communities came under attack from armed groups on both sides. A battle to forcibly create ethnic territories had kicked off.

This phase stretched from May 23 to June 15.

On a September night, when I visited the Meitei village of Singda Kadangband, located at the edge of the Meitei-dominated Imphal West district, its residents spoke about the sleepless nights they had spent for the six months of the conflict.

About 170 men from 165 households had been taking round-the-clock shifts to stand guard at 10 bunkers set up on the periphery of the village.

In early June, the villagers were approached by Meitei fighters. “They came forward to help us, but we didn’t allow them. We are afraid that later they will take advantage of us,” said N Bobi Singh, who had been organising the surveillance.

This is when the Assam Rifles presentation acknowledged groups of fighters from both communities got involved.

The state has a long and troubled history with more than 30 armed groups from different ethnic communities that call it home. They have fought for demands that range from separate nation-states to the creation of new states within India based on ethnic identities.

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Many of them draw resources from and camp in Myanmar. The influence of the Meitei armed groups, which were particularly targeted by the government's armed forces, had been waning since the 2000s. And a majority of the Kuki-Zo armed groups had signed the SoO agreement with the government.

Researchers noted reports of how the Indian armed forces, with the help of Kuki militias, have strategically isolated militia factions from other ethnicities. This allegation, coupled with a track record of human rights violations and unlawful killings, has significantly tarnished the Assam Rifles' standing within the Meitei community. The paramilitary is perceived as biased whereas the state police have faced accusations of bias against Kuki communities.

This conflict gave the Kuki and the Meitei armed groups a new lease on life, besides leading to the emergence of new Meitei militias.

On the Kuki-Zo side, the groups bound by the ceasefire had begun from the initial stages to help civilians who had taken up arms.

"Some of the [cadres] of the Suspension of Operations groups helped us set up the bunkers because they have experience," said 35-year-old Mimin Sithlou, the joint secretary of the defence committee under the Committee on Tribal Unity, a conglomerate of civil society organisations functioning largely in Kangpokpi district, who oversaw the management of the bunkers there.

The involvement of these cadres put the "VBIGs under pressure" to also join the conflict to fight on behalf of the Meitei community, the Assam Rifles document noted. VBIGs are valley-based insurgent groups, referring to the older Meitei-affiliated armed groups.

They began "providing arms and ammunition", consolidating their base and "increasing recruitment and ideological support", the presentation said.

As militias on either side of the divide began amping up recruitment and training of young people, particularly

from rural areas, the conflict would sometimes ebb but then pick up again. The stalemate came into being.

The stalemate

In Haipi village, located about 15km (10 miles) from the trenches dug at the border of Kangpokpi district, Christmas passed without any celebrations for Janggoulun Kipgen's family.

I first met 19-year-old Kipgen in one of the bunkers in September. "We were trained for five to six days back in our village," he told me, holding a rifle.

On December 25, sitting inside her house in Haipi, Kipgen's mother, Neinkhongah Kipgen, told me: "Who won't fear to send their son to the front lines? We can only pray that he's safe."

Meitei civilians in villages like Singda Kadangband also face a similar dilemma. The nights seem endless, and the days are spent with unceasing uncertainty.

"Except for the 60+-year-olds, everyone is expected to do 24-hour shifts," a villager who didn't wish to be named, told me back in September. "I have a one-year-old baby and work as a welder. I feel scared, but we don't have much choice."

"This will have a long-lasting impact, particularly on the young and future generations. They have guns to defend their community, but that is not exactly how it will pan out. The person might use it to solve personal enmity. Then some unemployed people might start extortion. Then there can be cases of mistaken identity killing and then revenge killing. It is going to become a vicious cycle," retired Lieutenant General Konsam Himalay Singh told me.

What Lieutenant General Singh said had begun to play out by December when I last reported from Manipur. Videos of gun-toting men in the valley and

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the hills had proliferated on social media. The armed “volunteers” were being valorised on social media while in personal spaces, many spoke of the worries of young men being lured or recruited by militias, spawning a never-ending cycle of attack, revenge and turf war.

This is despite more than 60,000 armed personnel of the federal government’s paramilitary forces, the army and the state police enforcing a buffer zone dividing a large part of the state into two ethnic territories that each community fears crossing.

On April 19, Manipur will vote — along with several other parts of the country — even as the conflict rages on between the two communities.

“The chief minister should have been thrown out. He is the head of state, and if he can’t be trusted, ... the army and police should have gone on overdrive and

taken control over the area, ... but eventually, it was allowed to continue because when it simmers, your voting aggregate increases,” said the retired police officer familiar with the security and intelligence operations in the region.

The second part of this series looks at the role of the drug trade, politics and armed groups in keeping Manipur on a boil.

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(With inputs from Harshitha Manwani, Mohan Rajagopal, Aryan Chaudhary and Vedant Kottapalle)



THE PROMISED SOLUTION





A Tribute to our Frontline Heroes!

In the shadows of a nation's call,
Frontline heroes stand, giving their all.
Through the storms of strife, they bravely fight,
Yet victimized by unjust might.

Their courage shines in darkest hours,
But tyranny seeks to silence their powers.
In the face of oppression, they remain strong,
Their resolve unwavering, their spirit a song.

With each heartbeat, they defy the odds,
Their sacrifice known to the very gods.
Though their path may be fraught with pain,
Their legacy of love and hope shall remain.

So let us honor these heroes true,
For their valor and sacrifice imbue
Our world with light, in the face of night,
In tribute to those who bravely fight.
TAHCHAPA, KUKI CHAPA!!

- Lunginmang Kipgen