

Thingkho Le Malcha

A Daily Newsletter by KSO Media & Documentation Cell



Saikho RELIEF CENTRE

Saikho Community Hall, Sadar Hills

Managed by
District Administration &
Kuki CSOs, Sadar Hills

Total Inmates Registered: 87



KUKI VICTIMS' UPDATE

As on 20.02.2024



164
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.

DISTURBING VANDALISM AND ARSON HIT IMPHAL AREA; INTERNET BAN YET TO BE IMPOSED

In a disturbing turn of events, the peaceful neighbourhood of Wangkhei in Imphal East was marred by acts of vandalism and arson in the wee hours of Saturday night.

This is in continuation of various Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) Offices being torched in the Imphal valley since the day before yesterday evening, such as the office of United Committee Manipur (UCM) and Coalition Against Drugs and Alcohol (CADA) etc.

In the latest case of arson in the Imphal valley, the office of the Nongpok Leingak Apunba Nupi Lup (NLANL), nestled within a rented house, fell victim to the rage of unknown miscreants. Adding to the chaos, a rented room housing a journalist, N Kumar, from a local TV channel, was engulfed in flames, reducing all belongings to ashes.

The repercussions of this act were not limited to property damage as reports emerged of N Kumar being abducted and subjected to brutal assault by the assailants.

At present, he is receiving medical treatment at Raj Medicity, battling the physical and psychological trauma inflicted upon him.

In response to this appalling incident, the NLANL president Y Memma, stepped forward to condemn the attack on its premises.

Against the backdrop of ongoing crisis gripping the state, the organisation called upon the responsible parties to hold accountability for their actions, demanding a clear explanation for the assault on the journalist and the subsequent arson.



It may be noted that during this week a series of violent incidents including a bomb blast at the office premises of a student body inside the DM University complex, followed by the burning of CSOs offices located in various parts of Imphal has rocked the Imphal valley since February 21 evening. Arson attacks and bomb blasts, acts of violence that frequently lead to property damage, injury and loss of life are clear indicators of breakdown of law and order when they occur within a city. The Imphal Valley has been plagued by such violent incidents since the onset of the ethnic conflict last year. Meitei radical groups, militants, and armed individuals have been responsible for various acts of violence, dominating the news coverage of Imphal-based media outlets.

Two students sustained injury in the blast at AMSU office in DM University Complex. Among them, one student identified as Oinam Kenegy (24) succumbed to injury while another identified as Salam Michael (24) is currently undergoing treatment at Raj Mdicity Hospital. Video of the blast captured on CCTV went viral on social media. Police sources suggested the use of remote control to trigger the blast.

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Located at Pureiromba Khongnangkong, MAPI Council office Manipur at Wangkhei, and Macha Leima at Palace Compound in Imphal East district was also set ablaze by unknown miscreants. A vehicle was also burnt at Mayai Lambi road near Keishampat Laishom Leirak by unknown miscreants. Around the same time unknown miscreants also blasted a bomb at the residence of an individual at Tera Yengkhom Leirak. However, no one was reported injured in the blast.

A series of arson occurring within the Imphal valley once again highlighted the breakdown of law and order in the Imphal valley. The valley is plagued by various acts of violence and arson for days, yet the state government's response to quell such acts is in stark contrast compared

to the few hours of protest against the unjust act of District Administration in Lamka district where the state powers acted swiftly to ban internet connections including WiFi within the district, ongoing for 10 days or more. New orders were issued to continue the ban when clearly there has been no further incident of protest and violence in the district post the Wall of Remembrance Massacre. In contrast, the state government failed to demonstrate the same law and order in the Imphal valley where there has been more serious concerns. Internet and WiFi connections are yet to be closed exhibiting a discriminatory picture of quelling violence and protest in the Imphal valley and hill district respectively.

RPF CALLS FOR LIBERATION OF MANIPUR FROM INDIA, ACCUSE THE CENTRE OF ALIGNING WITH KUKI COMMUNITY

The RPF's 45th Independence Demand Day was held today, the 25th February 2024, Sunday in and outside Manipur at all the units, departments and stations of the RPF and its army wing, PLA said in a release made by Roben Khuman, Deputy Secretary Publicity, Revolutionary People's Front.

MM Ngouba, acting President of Revolutionary People's Front (RPF) has called the people of Manipur to join the struggle for liberation of Manipur while accusing the Government of India of having "hidden agenda" behind the crisis in the State.

In a message to the people of Manipur on the 45th Independence Demand Day, Ngouba said that the only way to protect and defend what rightfully belongs to the Meiteis is to become an independent nation.

The acting president called the people to join the struggle for the liberation of Manipur and stated that



now is not the time for hesitation or regret; but a time for Meiteis to take up every available means and march in unison to break free from this chain of slavery.

Ngouba alleged that the Indian government is unwilling to provide a solution because of its

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concealed agenda despite having all the powers to stop the ongoing conflict in Manipur.

He also accused the Gol of “aligning” with the Kuki-Zo community and ignoring the “cries and sufferings of innocent civilians, including women and children” from the Meitei community.

“Truly speaking, all these circumstances stem from decisions or positions preconceived by India, allowing them to persist as long as they do not jeopardize India’s interests,” Ngouba alleged.

Further, he maintained that the protracted situation has revealed and provided clarity on the “fundamental motivations” of Gol despite its persistent attempt to conceal it.

“At first glance, it appears that there is either no policy or perhaps an incorrect notion. Through this extended conflict, it becomes apparent that even if there is a flaw in the governance, there is a call to rectify the injustices, however the concerned authorities are unable to implement necessary corrections when prompted”, he said.

Ngouba also envisaged that India’s foreign policy will gradually become aggressive leading to the country losing its “influence on international stage”.

The Acting President alleged that India’s national interest to fight against China has contributed to the crisis in Manipur.

He said, “Whether they perceived Manipur as potentially aligning with China or foresee unfavorable outcomes if China intervenes, there remains a compelling need for them to dismantle the revolutionary groups in Manipur and WESEA region, reducing their strength as much as possible, and also inciting the people of these regions to stand against China.”

Ngouba claimed that India is assisting Myanmar as a strategic measure against China and also to counter the revolutionary groups of Manipur, Assam and Nagaland. He alleged that “Utilizing the Kukis under Suspension of Operations (SoO) as a weapon, initiating widespread poppy plantation in the hill areas, inducting illegal immigrants into Manipur are all tactics employed by India in its effort to counter China.”

Further he accused Gol of using the Chin-Kuki community to combat the Meitei armed groups and also to exert pressure on Myanmar. Ngouba alleged that the underlying theme of ‘Act East Policy’ is to push India’s soft power and held that the debacle in Manipur and its border, which serves as a gateway to the Act East Policy, has exposed the true nature of India’s national interests. He also said that ‘Act East Policy’ will soon become ‘Fight East Policy’.

Further, MM Ngouba criticised Gol for not respecting the sanctity of Manipur’s border with Myanmar while proclaiming that “not a single inch of its land can be violated” in other regions. “Honoring Manipur’s history, its socio-cultural diversity, communities, ethnicities, and the lives and property of its people are not a part of India’s national interests”, he maintained.

Reminding the people of the “indomitable fighting spirit, unwavering perseverance, skillfulness, unity and courage of the forefathers, the Acting President of RPF said “Waiting for mercy from the colonial rulers will inevitably result in further shrinking our land that was inherited from our forefathers and it will bring about the end of all ethnicities through violence, the extinction of indigenous peoples, and the ruination of our nation and society.

AFTER NON-DISTRIBUTION OF RELIEF MATERIALS FOR MORE THAN 10 DAYS; MANIPUR GOVT DENIES RUMORS OF RELIEF MATERIALS DELAY

The Manipur State Government denied rumors of alleged relief material delay in a recent statement. In a press release issued on February 24, the government affirmed its commitment to closely monitoring efforts aimed at restoring normalcy while acknowledging possible lapses in the conduct of various government officials.

However, the government did not address the duration for which relief materials were not provided to Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) in Churachandpur district, citing the February incident where the district administration office was set ablaze by unknown individuals as a reason.

According to several philanthropic organizations managing relief centers in the district, the most recent distribution of relief materials for IDPs occurred on February 12. With more than 10 days having elapsed since the last distribution, these organizations have encountered difficulties due to the lack of relief material disbursement.

Detailing the incident on February 15, the government statement highlighted that due to rumors spreaded by anti-social elements in Churachandpur, a mob of 800 to 1000 people ransacked and burnt the Deputy Commissioner (DC) and Superintendent of Police's (SP) office, along with twelve trucks and buses, two of which were carrying relief material for camps in Churachandpur District. The mob also torched the official residence of the DC, and the National Flag was reported to have been disrespected, leading to the loss of two lives and injury to a security forces personnel.

Despite these challenges, the government officials emphasized that the Deputy Commissioners and Superintendent of Police have been tirelessly working for the welfare of displaced persons since May 3, 2023.

No.H-3608/2/2023-HD-HD
GOVERNMENT OF MANIPUR
HOME DEPARTMENT: SECRETARIAT

PRESS RELEASE
24th February, 2024

1. The State Government has been closely monitoring the efforts to restore normalcy in the State, and the Government has time and again taken cognizance of the possible lapses in the conduct of the various officials of the Government. On 15th February, 2024, the Government, basis the preliminary evidence, decided to place 7 (seven) officers of various communities from Imphal and 1 (One) officer from Churachandpur under suspension.
2. On 15th February 2024, due to rumors spread by anti-social and irresponsible elements, in Churachandpur, a mob of 800 to 1000 people ransacked and burnt the Deputy Commissioners (DC) and Superintendent of Police's (SP) office in Churachandpur. 12 (Twelve) trucks / buses parked in the office complex were also vandalized/ burnt, 2 (two) of which were also carrying Relief Material for Relief Camps in Churachandpur Districts. Moreover, the mob also torched the official Residence of the DC, Churachandpur. Even the National Flag is reported to have been disrespected in the incident. In the unfortunate incident, two persons had lost their lives and one Security Forces personnel was injured.
3. Post the incident, an Organization named 'Indigenous Tribal Leaders' Forum (ITLF)' which claims to be the apex body of all Tribal Leaders of Kuki-Zo Community, issued Press Release(s) / Notice(s) dated 15th February 2024, 16th February 2024, 17th February 2024 and 19th February 2024, issuing direct threats against the Deputy Commissioner and Superintendent of Police of Churachandpur District, and even giving an ultimatum to them to leave the District, and close Government offices.
4. The Government of Manipur, through the Deputy Commissioners and Superintendent of Police of District has been working tirelessly for the welfare of the Displaced persons in all the Districts, since 3rd May, 2023. Even in volatile conditions, the Government Officials have been ensuring all displaced persons in the District(s) are taken care of, and all Relief Material reaches the needy in a timely manner.
5. Multiple welfare measures have been initiated for the displaced persons, with assistance from the Ministry of Home Affairs, and the Government assures to continue to do the same till all displaced persons have been adequately rehabilitated.
6. However, there have been reports from Churachandpur District, accusing the Government of delaying the Relief Material disbursement, post the 15th February 2024 incident. It may be noted that Deputy Commissioner of Churachandpur has always ensured that all Relief Materials such as Rice, Dal, Vegetables and other consumables are released in a timely manner for all Relief Camps, through the local



They asserted that even in volatile conditions, all displaced persons are being taken care of, and relief materials are reaching them in a timely manner, with assistance from the Ministry of Home Affairs.

Addressing allegations of delay in relief material disbursement post the February 15 incident, the statement clarified that the Deputy Commissioner of Churachandpur has consistently ensured the timely release of essential items for all relief camps through local civil society organisations.

MEITEI WOMEN JUSTIFIED LOOTING OF GOVERNMENT ARMORIES

Meitei women in Imphal valley have staged a sit-in-protest on Sunday claiming that the six people who were arrested in connection with arms looting case from Chingarel are innocent civilians.

Laishram Mema, representing the Khwairamband Ima Keithel Joint Co-ordinating Committee For Peace, emphasizes the imperative release of six village volunteers, highlighting their pivotal role in safeguarding Manipur. She also said that the innocent arm looters were picked up randomly by the security forces.

Briefing the media during the sit-in-protest at Imphal on Sunday, Mema said the six Meiteis who were arrested will be appearing in the Cheirap Court on February 29.

She claimed that the six Meitei individuals are innocent and no objectionable items were recovered from them. As such, the state government must make sure that no cases are taken up against the six Meiteis and all charges against them must be dropped.

There seems to be no law and order in the valley as the statement of the Meitei women, claiming that people arrested by police in connection with arms loot are innocent, speaks volumes.

The police have arrested the six individuals on the charge of looting arms. Yet, the Meiteis as usual without



any proof could claim that the arrested individuals are innocent. It is also an indication that the mob has taken over the control of law and order in the valley and the Meiteis seem to be of the opinion that protests are the solution to all their demands, whether it is reasonable or not.

The arrested Meiteis could be innocent citizens first. But, different charges could be taken up against them for looting arms from the police station. And it is for the court to decide, on whether they are innocent or guilty of the charge, not some meira-paibi making claims without proofs and or evidences of their innocence.



For the powerful, crimes are those that others commit.

– Noam Chomsky

INTERNET SUSPENSION IN CHURACHANDPUR DISTRICT EXTENDED TILL MARCH 2

The Manipur government on Sunday extended the suspension of internet services in Churachandpur district for another five days in view of the prevailing law and order situation in the district, following violence over an action taken against a policeman.

A Home department order, issued by Joint Secretary (Home) Mayengbam Veto Singh said, "The state government after reviewing the prevailing law and order situation in Churachandpur district decided to continue suspension of internet services and services through VPN throughout the whole revenue jurisdiction of Churachandpur district till 1:40 AM of March 2, 2024.



Mobile service providers are also directed to ensure compliance with the order, it said.



Renbeni Kikon
@kikon_renbeni



The [#present](#) and [#future](#) of [#Students](#) children & [#youth](#) of [#manipur](#) is in grave [#danger](#). Its high [#time](#) that we all join hands to [#protect](#) them. NOONE has the right to push them in [#TERROR](#) and [#DARKNESS!!](#) [#peace](#) [#MANIPUR_VIOLENCE](#) [#OneIndia](#) [#AajTakwithStudents](#) [#TakeMySPOT](#) [#Perry](#)



9:00 pm · 24 Feb 24 · 5,444 Views



(((Pradip R.Sagar)))
@pradiprsagar

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With NO designated camps, UNLF cadre roaming freely despite Peace Pact , flashing weapons & consolidating to launch offensive against Kuki community in the days to come in [#Manipur](#) [@AmitShah](#) [@NBirenSingh](#)

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indiatoday.in
Post-peace pact, why UNLF insurgents in Manipur have security forces concerned

5:37 pm · 25 Feb 24 · 269 Views

**NEWS ANALYSIS**

The Latest Form of Punishment in Manipur: Deprivation of Internet Rights

Martin Luther King Jr once said “True peace is not merely the absence of Tension, it is the presence of Justice”. Kukis’ right to internet connectivity is the latest victim to the never ending oppressive and discriminatory practice of the Meitei Government in Manipur against the Kukis. Thus, when Living with Injustice is the norm they set for the Kukis, is there any hope for Peace under their governance and power?

The importance of internet is so immense that the Government of India launched the Digital India scheme to transform India into a digitally empowered society and knowledge economy. Ranging from households to education, health care to financial services. Internet not only makes one’s life easier but empowers, enriches, informs and makes society more equitable. The importance of internet needs no reminder nor listing to stress how the ban in internet connection disrupts and deprives, as the district administration or state government who bans the Internet themselves know how handicapped and cripple one becomes without internet service. Thus, depriving one of his Rights to internet connection unjustly is a violation of his basic Human Right, the Fundamental Rights of Freedom of Speech and Expression and his Right to be Informed.

The Supreme Court bench in a significant ruling in 2020, said that access to internet is a Fundamental Right under Article 19 of the Constitution which deals with Freedom of Speech and Expression, subject to reasonable restrictions. It further said magistrates, while passing prohibitory orders, should apply their minds and follow the doctrine of proportionality. Proportionality means that the administrative action should not be more drastic than it ought to be for obtaining the desired result. This implies that canon should not be used to shoot a sparrow. Thus this doctrine tries to balance means with ends.

As per the amended India Telegraph Act of 1885, Internet shutdowns could only be ordered by a state government’s home secretary when deemed “necessary” or “unavoidable” in public emergencies or in the interest of public safety. In a landmark verdict in “Anuradha Bhasin versus the Union of India” case, the court prohibited the government from suspending the internet indefinitely and limited its shutdown to 15 days or less.

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With no events or threats that amount to a public emergency and with normalcy back in the district after the February 15 public outrage against the discriminatory and oppressive treatment of the Kukis, what compels the government of Manipur to extend the ban on the internet till 2nd March 2024? What is so deemed necessary that necessarily calls for the extension, punishing the Kukis for daring to question and protest against the oppressive and discriminatory practices of the Manipur government and for not being a silent victim to their oppression? If so, where is Democracy? Should a citizen in a democratic country lead the life of those under an autocratic rule or dictatorship? With this extension, the total number of days will tally to 16 against the permissible time limit set by the Supreme Court. Had there been a law and order threat, it would be understandable, but with normalcy returning, the extension is rather seen as a kind of punishment and oppression. Thus the question is, Is the Extension not violative of the Doctrine of Proportionality the concerned authority has to apply before depriving citizens of their Fundamental Rights to Internet services? If one's authority and one's own rules are the guiding principles of the government, then does the government concerned have the moral and legal right to claim itself as a democratic government?

The 15 February public outrage happened due to differential yardstick amongst the public employees and continual discriminatory practices and oppression of the government against the Kuki. However, the cries and anger of the Kuki populace meant so little to the district authority and the state government that they brazenly resorted to another discriminatory practice; the ban in internet and WiFi connection. While looting of Government armoury by the Meiteis, obstruction of state agencies from carrying out their official duty, public outrage and attack to the security forces to name a few, does not alarm the Manipur government or Home Secretary to impose an internet

ban, the people in the same political territory can be deprived of their Fundamental Right to internet connection. Where is the Equality of all that the constitution promised to its citizens? Is this the Justice the constitution promised to deliver? Are our liberty restricted within the walls of the whims and fancies of the state government?

The Government of Manipur's attempts to normalize their oppression of the Kukis in all sphere is a serious issue which the Central power and the Supreme Court should take a suo moto cognizance of, with repeated offences committed to brazenly and arbitrarily violate the Kukis of their Fundamental Rights and other Constitutional Rights by the State Government, turning a blind eye to their crimes would question their credibility, efficiency and commitment to protecting the ideals and the idea of India it is responsible to protect and deliver. They cannot let a constitutional institution and its agencies as means to discriminate and oppress lakhs of Indians who belong to a particular community against whom an ethnic cleansing pogrom is executed. They cannot let the constitution and its provisions be a Paper Tiger that can be stepped upon by anyone and everyone.

Oppression and discrimination against the Kuki community to soothe the egos and hatred of the Meiteis will not bring peace, it rather explicitly mirrors the standing of Manipur government in the pogrom. As Meitei's interest is what it intend to serve and fulfil, the Kukis deserve a Separate Government under whom their rights as an Indian are protected and fulfilled. We are Indians thus we deserve Equality, Democracy and Justice, not Oppression, Discrimination and Injustice.

**OPINION**

Being Politically Correct: The Kukis Have Everything to Gain; the Meiteis Have Everything to Lose

Since May 3, 2023, the Kuki-Zo community has been at the receiving end of the state-sponsored ethnic cleansing campaign in the hands of the dominant community. So far, 164 have lost their lives, 200+ villages (7000+ houses), 360+ churches and other places of worship have been burnt, and 41,425 people were displaced from their homes. Moreover, nearly a hundred have died in the relief camps due to lack of medical care and financial constrictions and many are helplessly waiting for their end.

Among the most dreadful incidents are those involving women being paraded naked, gangraped, and murdered. A few survivors who are still struggling to overcome the trauma are the living testimonies. The way David Thiek was murdered, a video in which his head was hanged over a fencing pole went viral, is something nobody would have imagined to have happened in this “civilised” world.

Even after nine months, the attack on Kuki villages and their properties continues unabated. In the latest one such incident, a house in Chikim Veng, Moreh, was burnt by the Meitei Police Commandos (CDOs) on 18 February 2024. Since the beginning of January 2024, these CDOs have burnt at least three schools, one church and several houses in Moreh alone.

Though the current conflict is often considered as a clash between two ethnicities; the Kukis and the

Meiteis, it is not really so in the sense that the Kukis are a minority community while the Meiteis who constitute the politically dominant community are openly supported by the State Government. In many cases, the Central Forces who are supposed to be a neutral force appear biased towards the dominant community especially when its commanding officers are Meiteis. The presence of Meitei officers such as Col. Akash Oinam, Col. Nectar Sanjenbam, the recently appointed SSP (Combat) of Tengenoupal district, etc. during violence on ethnic line is simply ridiculous unless the intention is to annihilate the minority Kuki-Zo. To borrow a phrase from Professor Bimol Akoijam, “it is understandable, but not acceptable” that Meitei military officers take sides, but what is beyond our imagination is how officers belonging to one of the warring communities are being deployed in the sensitive buffer zones such as Dolaithabi-Saikul area and the strategic Tengenoupal district in which Moreh is a part of.

Among the legal fraternity, there is a common saying: “they [people in power] cannot violate the law, but can always bend.” This perfectly suits the dominant community who are now in control of the whole system. Whereas any Kuki-Zo who is critical of the state may be slapped with FIRs, or arrested even on mere suspicion, the Meiteis can roam

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the streets freely in full combat fatigues and weapon in hand, extort money, kidnap any person and take away their cars, and speak or write anything without any concern for the law. This is possible because they know they will be protected by their “Big Brother” Mr. Biren Singh whom they fondly call “Pabung” or (father).

Now that the ethnic clash is entering its tenth month without any sign of abatement, and both sides adamant on their demands – the Kukis for a Separate Administration and the Meiteis on wiping out the Kukis from Kangleipak – it is unlikely that they will find a common ground soon. What is also curious is how the other ethnic group, i.e. the Manipur Nagas, chose to remain neutral, the same way the Meiteis did during the Kuki-Naga clash in the 1990s. Being neutral in a situation like this is not neutrality in true sense, but rather siding with the perpetrators of the crime.

For in this war, the Meiteis as the dominant community in control of the state system gets the upper hand with an uninterrupted supply of arms and ammunition from the state armouries, and sometimes from the Central Forces as in the case of Moreh where they reportedly provided ammunition and security cover to the Meitei intruders. Moreover, these intruders into the Kuki-Zo territory also impudently burn houses, schools and church in the presence of the Central Forces.

Whatever has happened so far in Manipur is not only extremely unfortunate but also something the Kukis have never imagined. Considering the kind of cordial relationship they had with the Meiteis for centuries, it was but natural that not even in their wildest dreams did they anticipated to be made the soft target while they were least prepared.

Now, that the Kukis have suffered enough and lost so many lives and properties, it is no longer possible for them to imagine living together with the Meiteis again. In terms of casualties, the manner in which their women and children were subjected to, and how they have been demonised, the Kukis, with no other choice, now only think of living outside the territory of the Meiteis.

In the same way, the Meiteis have chewed more than what they could. Their dreams of re-establishing a

sovereign Kangleipak Kingdom however utopian it was, had been shattered with the symbolic titular King becoming an elected MP (Rajya Sabha). They can neither expand the territory of Kangleipak nor push for sovereignty as the VBIGs’ hideouts in Burma are destroyed one after another by the democratic forces. In fact, the politics of the Meiteis as an imagined “nation” have practically ended.

For them, the demand for pre-merger status, amendment of Article 3, ST status for Meitei/Meetei, border fencing, abrogation of FMR (or the Free Regime Movement), abrogation of SoO (Suspension of Operation) with Kuki militants, updating of NRC (National Register for Citizens), deportation of Myanmar Refugees in Manipur to Mizoram, and most importantly the genocidal slogan to wipe out all the Kukis from Manipur, all seems to be the cry of a desperate and confused community with nothing to benefit them in return. Even if any or some of these demands are achieved, there is practically nothing the Meiteis will get except some kind of xenophobic gratification.

However, in their desperate attempt to appear politically correct in the eyes of mainland Indians and the outside world, the Meiteis have been pressing one demand after another, blaming all viruses that ail their society to the Kukis. Remember a Meitei drug addict filed a PIL (Public Interest Litigation) in the Supreme Court against a man [Kuki] earlier arrested but released almost ten years ago on the charge that he was responsible for making him use drugs. In a viral [X-Space] video a few months ago, a Meitei man emotionally charged his fellow Meiteis to blame the Kukis for anything that happen under the sky including “mosquito bites” and “cough”. Such attempt at scapegoating the Kukis which appear delightful in the eyes of the innocent Meiteis seems to have become quite productive.

In the process, the Meitei community has been widening the already deep rooted hill-valley divide,

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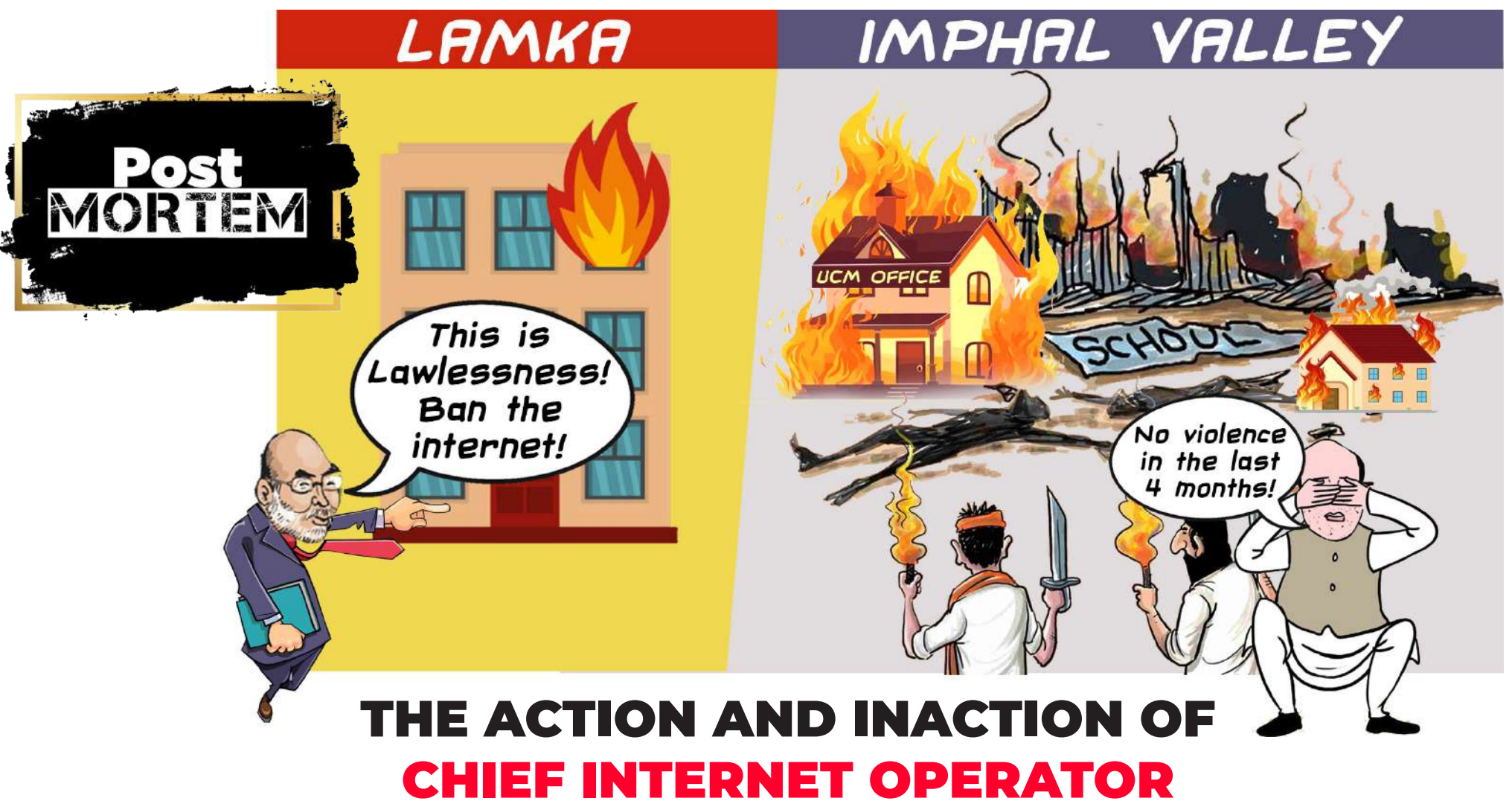
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thereby speeding up the process of “separation.” In fact, the Meiteis have started a war with the hope that they will wipe out the whole Kuki community from the soil of Manipur in a few weeks time. Now that they have failed miserably, there is practically nothing they might gain from this war. They may have looted properties worth crores left behind in Imphal, occupied buildings and offices as theirs, and even claimed ownership of the plots owned by the Kukis, but all these wouldn’t stand in the court someday if India continues to exist as a secular, democratic country.

Meanwhile, the Kukis have everything to gain politically, be it in the form of a Union Territory, State, or any other administrative arrangements deemed fit by the Centre. In fact, the terms “Kuki”, and “Kuki-Zo”, have become a household name for people following the current ethnic turmoil from different parts of the world. The systematic targeting of the minority Kuki-Zo by the dominant community also unified them more than ever. It also brought some semblance of cooperation with the Nagas which has been missing as a result of the dominant

community’s divide and rule policy for decades.

In contrast, the Meiteis have nothing to gain politically. In fact the term “Meitei” has become synonymous with “rapists”, “liars”, “looters” (in broad daylight), a community who paraded women naked and gangraped in the open field, and their mothers giving away a girl to their boys instead of protecting her (just the opposite to what the women of Lamka did). Even if this war continues for a longer period of time, it wouldn’t serve a purpose for them. They can only lose what they have cherished for decades such as the territorial integrity of Manipur, and the hard-earned fair-weather brotherhood with the Nagas on whom patience seems to have been running out for the constant atrocities meted out to their tribesmen and tribeswomen. Anyway, Manipur as a political entity inhabited by the Meiteis, Nagas and Kukis as the three major ethnicities seem to be nearing its end every passing day.





IF I DIE

Here I am, holding my breath,
In the dark - silent and cold,
Standing between my enemy and
My people, whom I loved and defended,
By all means, even unto death, if need be.

I know that with just one silly mistake,
The enemy can break the line,
Which we have guarded day and night,
Under dewy falls and cold rain,
Awake I must be so that my people can sleep.

I know not what lies ahead,
Whether I will die tomorrow or
Live for many years to tell my grandson
How I bravely fought this war,
While many good men laid down their lives.

But if I die, please do tell
My people not to cry for me,
To my mom how much she meant to me,
Tell my girl how much I love her,
And give her this ring in my pocket.

May I be buried only in the land of ours,
Where the wild grasses and flowers
Dance along the winds upon my grave,
Where the blackbird and cuckoo can sing
The sweetest songs every morning and evening.

For Soldiers Of The Hills,

- Hillsman J. Tearsworth