

# Thingkho *Le* Malecha

A Daily Newsletter by KSO Media & Documentation Cell



## AWAITING JUSTICE



### NGAMTHANG LHUNGDIM (41 YEARS)

S/O HOLKHOJANG LHUNGDIM

ADDRESS: KHONGSAI VENG, IMPHAL WEST

DATE OF DEATH: 4TH MAY, 2023

PLACE OF DEATH: KHONGSAI VENG, IMPHAL

CAUSE OF DEATH: BEATEN TO DEATH





## KUKI VICTIMS' UPDATE

As on 01.05.2024



**185**  
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.



# IMPHAL'S WORST FLOOD IN DECADES: BIREN GOVERNMENT NOW USES 'SMALL RATS' AS SCAPEGOAT FOR GOVERNMENT'S MISMANAGEMENT

The Meiteis' Kangleipak of Imphal, also called the "Kukis' Valley of Death", has witnessed its worst flood in recent history that affected thousands of people on Wednesday as the Northeast continued to reel under the effects of cyclonic storms which wreaked havoc in the region a day earlier.

Both the Imphal and Nambul rivers — which flow through the Greater Imphal area and have been above the danger level since Tuesday — breached their banks in multiple areas. Consequently, several localities had waist-deep flooding.

The devastating flood, described as the worst in the 21st century, have caught both residents and the state machinery under the incompetent leadership of N. Biren Singh by surprise, leaving them unprepared to handle the crisis.

Interestingly, the Meiteis' Chief Minister N. Biren Singh's right-hand man and a cabinet minister L. Sushindro has found the culprit for the flash flood to be "small rats", scapegoating the rats for their mismanagement and misgovernance of the state. In one of his videos which went viral on social media platforms, the Cabinet Minister Sushindro has accused the rats for causing a devastating flood in the Imphal valley. "When water from the rivers enters the small holes made by rats, the land surface becomes inundated thus causing breach of river banks", he said when asked by a media person.

No wonder an uneducated or an unintellectual who became a politician out of unaccounted wealth would only speak of such nonsense. Like his political boss N. Biren Singh, a less educated constable-turned politician, L. Sushindro followed the footprints of his boss.

Ironically, the Coordination Committee on Manipur Integrity (COCOMI), a leading Meitei CSO that declared war on the Kukis, has also issued a statement attributing



the recent devastating floods in the region to the negligence of responsible government departments.

The Meitei CSO stressed that the flash flood and subsequent devastation were direct consequences of the lack of effort by responsible government departments. The absence of proper drainage systems exacerbated the situation, leading to widespread destruction, it said.

In the aftermath of killer Cyclone Remal, a total of four persons including two women lost their lives and five persons including two minors got injured in different districts of Manipur as of Thursday, officials said.

# UGC DE-RECOGNISES MANIPUR'S SANGAI INTERNATIONAL UNIVERSITY

The University Grants Commission (UGC) has removed Sangai International University in Manipur's Churachandpur from its list of universities.

The higher education regulator said the university cannot offer UGC-specified degree at undergraduate (UG), or postgraduate (PG) level as well as a PhD. UGC advised prospective students against enrolling in any of the programmes of the university

"In the absence of UGC approval, any degree issued/awarded by the Sangai University, Manipur shall not be treated recognised/valid for the purpose of higher education and employment," the UGC notice said.

The Sangai International University was established by the Manipur government as a state private university. The name of the university was enlisted in the UGC list of universities in June 2015.

According to UGC, the university was requested to provide the information required for inspection via various official letters, however, the university did not submit the required information.

"Therefore, UGC issued a Show Cause Notice vide F. No. 8-19/2015 (CPP-I/PU) dated 19.12.2023. The university was given an opportunity to show cause as to why action against the university be not taken by the UGC



to remove its name from the list of Universities as maintained by the UGC under Section 2(f) of the UGC Act, 1956," the notice said.

A notice was also sent to Manipur's department of higher education to take immediate action and send its comments. However, the UGC has not received any reply from the university or the government, it said.



**One must either live in silence or become a rebel in the face of every Injustice .**

— Anonymous



# CHIEF PROPAGATOR OF LIES - LICYPRIYA KANGUJAM, EXPOSED HERSELF ONCE AGAIN

Licypriya Kangujam, a self-proclaimed environmentalist from Manipur, infamous for propagating lies in various platforms, has been once again exposed for her mythomania and morbid lying.

The self-styled Child Activist on various social media platforms claimed that European Union (EU) provided Rs. 2.25 crores to assist victims of the severe storm that wreaked havoc in Manipur.

However, her bogus claims have been refuted by the chief Secretary of Manipur, Dr. Vineet Joshi in an official press release, terming it as totally false and untrue since all financial requirements in connection with the recent storm are being met from the available National Disaster Response Fund and the State Disaster Response Fund.

In a statement, Chief Secretary Vineet Joshi said no relief was undertaken by the European Union (EU) and its humanitarian partners in the state. He stated that all financial requirements in connection with the recent storm were being met from the available National Disaster Response Fund (NDRF) and the State Disaster Response Fund (SDRF).

“No NGOs or civil society organisations have been entrusted to carry out the relief work. A sum of Rs 30 crores has already been sanctioned by the state government to the Deputy Commissioners of the concerned districts,” the chief secretary added in the statement. Joshi explained that any reports of assistance made by the European Union were “totally false and untrue”.

Meanwhile, Licypriya Kangujam’s double standard personality has come to the forefront once again as she



urged the head of Christian world, the Pope, and Italian Prime Minister to make efforts to provide special humanitarian support to the victims of violence and to end the communal crisis in Manipur besieged by conflict between two groups which erupted on May 3, 2023.

The Christian world is aware of how she had raised funds and ammunitions for Meitei armed radical groups, indirectly assisting them in waging war against the other Christian community in the state of Manipur.

She has been brandishing the Christian community as illegal immigrants in Manipur, calling them with all sorts of names – Poppy Planters, Drug Peddlers etc. She has been on all forefronts of Social media to demonize the Kuki community.

It is oxymoronic that she now, after harboring all forms of hatred against a Christian community, in her Pharisee mode dared to approach the head of the Christian world for assistance to Manipur violence.

## COCOMI BLAMES GOVERNMENT NEGLIGENCE FOR FLOOD DESTRUCTION

The Coordination Committee on Manipur Integrity (COCOMI) has issued a statement attributing the recent devastating floods in the region to the negligence of responsible government departments.

Yumkhaibam Surjitkumar Khuman, the Media Coordinator for COCOMI, highlighted the dire situation caused by heavy rainfall on May 28, 2024. Numerous houses have been damaged, and a significant amount of property has been destroyed due to flooding, leaving innocent people in immense suffering.

In a press release, Surjitkumar Khuman, has emphasized the urgent need for both the central and state governments to provide necessary aid to mitigate the impact of this natural disaster. He stressed that the flash flood and subsequent devastation were direct consequences of the lack of effort by responsible government departments. The absence of proper

drainage systems exacerbated the situation, leading to widespread destruction.

He has called for the immediate deployment of the National Disaster Response Force (NDRF) to assist in rescue operations and urged authorities to prioritize the rescue of those trapped by the floods. Additionally, he has emphasized the importance of opening proper relief camps to accommodate those affected by the flood.

In response to the crisis, he has urged civic organizations and civil society groups to come together and provide support at this critical juncture. He emphasized the need for solidarity and collaborative efforts to address the challenges posed by the flood and provide assistance to those in need.

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## TWO SUSPECTED KCP-ACM CADRES ARRESTED, WEAPONS RECOVERED

Manipur Police arrested two alleged members of the outlawed Kangleipak Communist Party (KCP-Apunba City Meitei) during an operation in Thoubal district on Wednesday, according to an official report released on Thursday.

The arrested individuals, identified as Lairenlakpam Thoiba alias Sanajaoba Meitei (26) and Singam Kabikanta alias Thoiba Meitei (32), were apprehended alongside a cache of weapons and ammunition.

The seized items include two 9mm pistols with magazines containing 15 live rounds.

The suspects were travelling in an SUV at the time of their arrest. (NE Now News)





# BIREN'S 'MINI-SINGAPORE' AMBITIONS DERAILED DUE TO FAILED URBAN POLICIES; NOT BECAUSE OF A PARTICULAR COMMUNITY

In an interesting and comical statement, the Chief Minister of Manipur N. Biren Singh, in 2021, said he will turn Manipur into the next Singapore. Addressing a one-day political conference in Yaiskul, the Chief Minister then said, we will turn our state like mini-Singapore, but our state won't have such high skyscrapers like Singapore as our state is within the earthquake zone.

However, his imaginary statement has come to haunt him after engineering a state sponsored ethnic cleansing against the minority Kuki community in 2023. While he wished to blame every calamity befalling the state of Manipur, rather his wrong policies have proven him wrong on several occasions.

When Cyclone Remal hit the northeastern states of India, Manipur and Mizoram were two states badly affected by the cyclonic storm and rainfall. Major portion of Manipur's capital city Imphal was submerged on Wednesday as a result of the torrential rainfall on Tuesday triggered by the cyclone Remal.

The flood submerged roads, residential, administrative and business centres in Imphal which included Khurai-Lamlong area, Sangakpham, Mantripukhri, Heingang, Uripok, Keishampat, Khuyathong, Kairang among others.

It is worth noting that the intense downpour on May 28 covered several districts of the state and also affected key catchment areas along the northern belt of Manipur leading to the overflow of Imphal and Nambul rivers in the valley.

After the torrential flood wreaked havoc in parts of Imphal city, N. Biren Singh on his social media handle tweeted that flood in valley and landslide in hills are due to deforestation, with a subtle blame on a particular community for the deforestation.

While a man in authority – Mr. N. Biren Singh failed to see, nature itself manifested the failure of the Manipur Government.



He promised a deadline for the completion of “The Imphal Smart City” project in June 2024. But now it has turned into “Water World.”

It is now time to reflect on the fact that all crisis in Manipur have had the hand of the ruling Government, instead of blaming one particular community.

While the intensity of the rainfall due to Cyclone Remal is a natural phenomenon, several human-induced factors have exacerbated the flooding. Unplanned urbanization has led to the encroachment of water bodies and wetlands, which historically served as natural buffers against floods. The inadequate and poorly maintained drainage systems are incapable of handling the excess water, leading to waterlogging in many areas. These factors combined highlighted the need for a comprehensive review of the state's urban policies. Failed urban policies is one of the main cause of flooding in Imphal valley.

The Chief Minister should rather focus on sustainable urban planning for flood mitigation strategies rather than blaming one particular community for every calamities that the state encounters.

# A PERMANENT POLITICAL SOLUTION FOR THE KUKI COMMUNITY MUST PRECEDE PEACE

There is a saying that Peace without justice is an illusion. “True peace is not merely the absence of tension; it is the presence of justice.”

In the wake of the worst inhumane atrocities meted to the Kukis by the hands of communal Meiteis under the narcissistic leadership of N. Biren Singh since the outbreak of the state-sponsored ethnic cleansing pogrom, justice must prevail for lasting peace.

With the deep divide, the World knows that the majority Meiteis and minority Kukis cannot ever live together again under one administrative roof. The warring communities are already separated ethnically, physically, geographically, demographically and emotionally. The “Line of Control” or the “buffer zones” have been in existence between the two communities and anyone from either community dare not cross-over each other’s forefathers’ lands.

Fully understanding the ground reality, it is ludicrous for the Meiteis’ women group, Imagi Meira, alongside the Women’s Committee of the Delhi Meitei Coordinating Committee (DMCC), to urge the Prime Minister of India, Narendra Modi, for his immediate action to restore normalcy and ensure peaceful coexistence in the violence-stricken state of Manipur.

In a memorandum submitted today, the Meiteis’ women group, also known as “Meira Paibis” erroneously highlighted the alleged severe impact of the ongoing violence on the Meitei communities and other residents of Manipur. The fact of the matter is that the Meiteis’ are rather the perpetrators and aggressors of the ongoing ethnic pogrom against the Kuki community.

Contrary to the claims made by Meira Paibis, who are also one party of criminal and illegal activities, that the Meiteis are attacked by the [Kuki] armed miscreants, and accusing the Government of India of failing to protect the Meitei people, it is the double-engine governments at the centre and state who kept deaf ears to plight of the Kukis who suffered immeasurable atrocities at the hands of the Meitei armed extremists.



When the Kukis were mercilessly murdered in the “valley of death” or Imphal, the Government of India and State Government failed to protect the innocent lives of the Kukis. They are forced to survive with no security and compelled to rely on their ability to defend themselves because of the complete failure of the state authority.

The Meitei groups pointing fingers at the Suspension of Operation (SoO) groups of Kukis for the mayhem is just an eyewash, searching for an escape route for their perpetual crimes against humanity. Rather, it is the proscribed Meitei militants and radicalised private militia groups of Arambai Tenggol and Meitei Leepun who are given impunity by the State and Central Governments in their quest to annihilate the Kukis. They are the ones who persistently attacked the Kukis’ ancestral land by crossing the “buffer zones” using sophisticated weapons handed to them by the communal Manipur Police Department.

To ensure justice along with permanent peace in this northeastern state of India, the Government must acknowledge de-facto separation of the two communities and subsequently grant the demand for a political ‘Separate Administration’ of the Kukis so that the two communities could co-exist as good neighbours. The only solution remains to be the formalisation of a ‘Separate Administration’ for the Kukis within the ambit of the Union of India.





FEATURED ARTICLE

**Arambai Tenggol: How a Meitei ‘Socio-Cultural Organisation’ Became an Armed-to-the-Teeth Militia**

Angchuman Choudhury

On March 30, weeks before Manipur went to the polls, an unusual press release surfaced in local media circles. Directing all party candidates to refrain from extravagant public campaigning, it imposed a moratorium on feasts, loudspeakers, flag-raising, and door-to-door visits.

The letterhead had the words “Arambai Tenggol” printed alongside the logo of a charging cavalry trooper set against the Salai Taret, the ancient Meitei kingdom’s flag. The statement—or diktat, some would say—was signed by one Laishram Robason, who was identified as the outfit’s “Control Room Operator”.

To a lay observer, the statement would probably read like a routine pre-election directive issued by a competent government authority. But, neither is the document routine, nor is the issuing authority competent. The extralegal directive captures everything that has gone horribly wrong in Manipur since May 3, 2023, when the north-eastern State slipped into an ethnic conflagration that has taken more than 221 lives, injured thousands, and displaced many more.

Among the many entities at the centre of this tragic convulsion is Arambai Tenggol. The conflict has many moving parts, but Arambai has emerged as a key driving force that continues to shape and fuel it. More

than that, the Meitei militia has become an apt metaphor for India’s deep-seated pathologies of governance that have, time and again, allowed civil conflicts to fester for longer than they should.

It is, therefore, crucial to understanding Arambai as an organisation as well as what the state’s response to it means in the dual context of the Manipur conflict and ethnonationalist majoritarianism in India today.

**A social creature**

At the outset, Arambai Tenggol looks like a political force. But, it is, first and foremost, a social phenomenon. The name itself—Arambai Tenggol, the much-feted and feared cavalry force of the ancient Meitei kingdom, Kangleipak, whose weapon of choice was a unique poison-dart called “Arambai”—evokes a sense of Meitei cultural pride and historical nostalgia. By leaning on the crutch of an imperialist past, the outfit, which was a non-entity until the conflict began in May 2023, was able to appropriate the legacy of Meitei nationalism and gain wide acceptance in Meitei society.

In fact, Arambai Tenggol was born from the modern

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vestiges of Meitei royalty. Reportedly, it was floated by “Maharaja” Leishemba Sanajaoba, the titular king of Manipur and current Rajya Sabha member from the State. In September 2022, the outfit organised an “oath-taking ceremony” at his Imphal residence. In attendance was Sanajouba himself, alongside Korounganba Khuman (pseudonym for Tyson Ngangbam), the outfit’s chief. Dozens of cadres wearing their signature black tees with the cavalry-cum-Salai Taret logo emblazoned on the breast pockets were also present.

Simultaneously, Arambai scaled up its social media presence, especially on Facebook. This was a strategic move made at a time when smartphones and the Internet had penetrated Manipur, especially among the younger generation. Using social media, the outfit began to comment on a number of social and political issues. It had a particular obsession with history, reaffirming, sometimes reimagining, Meitei history while denying Kuki-Zo history. For instance, on December 24, 2022, it re-shared a news article in Meitei on Manipur Chief Minister N. Biren Singh dismissing the Anglo-Kuki War of 1917-19.

Beyond these commentaries, Arambai members have used the online space to project a more “edgy” and “cool” image of the outfit, by uploading their pictures in advanced military gear and using AI to post funny morphed images of themselves. This was meant to appeal to the young Meitei, particularly men. The outfit gave them an acceptable and modern platform to perform their masochism and channel their social angst towards what they perceived to be a righteous armed revolution in defence of their community.

Notably, Arambai has undertaken social service among displaced Meitei people, such as distribution of relief material. By doing so, it has attempted to project itself as a constructive social force and first responder in and around the strife-torn Imphal Valley. Along with its military action in defence of the Meitei community in the ongoing conflict, this has created, among ordinary

Meiteis, an image of the outfit being a viable alternative to an ineffective and inaccessible state.

### **Cultural repertoires**

Arambai has also engaged in cultural policing as part of its social outreach programme. This includes urging the Meitei to shun foreign brands and embrace traditional attire. By doing so, it has tried to project itself as a vanguardist social force that is here to fix the ills of modernisation and globalisation. But its revivalism goes beyond material culture. Arambai has also used religion to push a new imagination of Meitei indigeneity.

One of Arambai’s key social pivots is Sanamahism, the traditional Meitei religion that was gradually replaced by Vaishnavite Hinduism by the 18th century. The outfit has used the Sanamahi revivalist movement, which has gained traction in recent decades, as an instrument for Meitei mobilisation. A month before the conflict began in May 2023, Arambai members demonstrated their fealty to Sanamahism by storming the house of Takhellambam Ramananda, a Meitei Christian pastor, in Imphal for his allegedly blasphemous remarks against the Meitei religion.

The outfit often invokes the names of Sanamahi deities in its social media rhetoric. For instance, in a Facebook post on February 18, 2023, it allegorically places the top Sanamahi pantheon into the outfit’s senior leadership, projecting Lainingthou Sanamahi, the Supreme God, as the president. Given the centrality of Sanamahism in early Meitei kingdom repertoires, Arambai’s adoption of Sanamahi revivalism dovetails comfortably with its nationalist-imperialist reimagination of Meitei society. In fact, the September 2022 oath-taking ceremony at Sanajaoba’s residence was done in the name of Sanamahism. Iterations in praise of

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Lainingthou Sanamahi are often accompanied with praise for Sanajaoba.

However, Arambai's social and cultural agendas do not define it as an organisation. They are mere pathways to political power and military dominance for an organisation that relies on brute force and elite connections for survival. No outfit, after all, can transform itself from a social collective into a popular militia by merely ranting about Meitei history and culture on Facebook. There is more to it.

### **A political force?**

It is hardly a secret that Arambai has been close to the Imphal-based Meitei political elite since its inception. In addition to Sanajaoba, the outfit enjoys, as recent reportage by Greeshma Kuthar in *The Caravan* suggests, the "personal patronage" of Biren Singh. In June 2022, Khuman had shared an all-smiles photograph on Facebook of himself and his cadres meeting Singh at his official residence. Since then, the outfit has routinely endorsed the Chief Minister on social media. A former paramilitary officer told *The Telegraph* in July 2023 that the outfit "had been raised with the blessings of the Chief Minister".

When the conflict broke out, the State government looked away as Arambai armed itself by looting police armouries and attacked Kuki-Zo villages. This gave the outfit a sense of impunity and invincibility that it has since used to impose its writ in the Valley and along the foothills. Meanwhile, Arambai has been aggressively pushing the same political rhetoric as the Singh government through its online channels. This includes creating a National Register of Citizens for Manipur to identify "illegal immigrants" and fencing the India-Myanmar border to stop "narco-terrorists", both of which are not-so-veiled pejorative references to the Kuki-Zo community.

While Arambai continues to bank on the Singh government's patronage for survival and expansion,

it has also taken on a life of its own, representing popular Meitei aspirations and projecting them onto a fiercely contested political-military public space. It is precisely for this reason that the outfit is today able to issue pre-election orders that violate the Manipur government's law enforcement mandate, order re-polling at booths, and administer "oaths" to lawmakers at Imphal's Kangla Fort, almost like a state-in-waiting or a quasi-statutory authority.

According to reports from the ground, Singh appears to be using the outfit to assert his political influence and ability to dominate the battlefield. In turn, Arambai is able to position itself as a local kingmaker. According to an intelligence officer interviewed by a magazine, Singh "orchestrated" the Arambai-led Kangla Fort event on January 24 to "show the Centre that he can't be rendered inconsequential" and that, if need be, he can "run his own parallel government in Manipur". In a recent interview to Karan Thapar, Paolienlal Haokip, the BJP MLA from Manipur, made a similar assertion, claiming that Arambai was created to "preserve the Chief Minister's position for Biren Singh".

The Centre has done little to fix this, for reasons best known to the BJP-led political dispensations in New Delhi and Imphal. Recently, the National Investigation Agency (NIA) filed a charge sheet against Meitei insurgents belonging to the Valley Based Insurgent Groups (VBIGs), such as the People's Liberation Army (PLA) and the Kanglei Yawol Kanna Lup (KYKL), for fomenting violence in Manipur. But there was no mention of Arambai.

This shows that the Centre does not want to project the outfit as a major terrorist group with international linkages. The Central forces also find themselves unable to restrain the Arambai because of lack of directions from New Delhi and

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the absence of the Armed Forces (Special Powers) Act (AFSPA) in the Valley.

Any government move against Arambai runs the risk of alienating Singh and large sections of Meitei society who back the outfit. The BJP cannot afford that, especially in light of the general election. Moreover, exogenous sectarian interests might also be shaping the Modi government's inaction to the outfit.

Last year, Kim Gangte, former Member of Parliament from the Outer Manipur constituency, told NewsClick that “people believe” the Arambai is an “RSS creation”. Thanks to these elite networks of patronage, Arambai has been able to dig its feet deeper into the Valley's mainstream political space. It has even dislodged another radical Meitei vigilante organisation, Meitei Leepun, which rose to prominence during the conflict. Arambai displayed greater organisational finesse and social appeal than Leepun, while also securing privileged support from the Meitei political elite.

### **Emerging cleavages**

But, Singh's ostensible support for the outfit is a double-edged sword. By patronising a militia that only does his bidding, the Chief Minister risks alienating other Meitei leaders, the BJP high command, and even sections of the Meitei public who might be growing weary of Arambai's partisan vigilantism. During the recent election in Imphal, several Meitei voters expressed frustration at the outfit's alleged disruption of the voting process and indulging in proxy voting. One exasperated Meitei voter told a digital news platform that people who looked like Arambai cadres cast votes on behalf of her entire family.

Yumnam Shanta, a Congress polling agent, claimed that Arambai members had attacked his house on April 19. Shanta's sister told the media that she had asked her son, who is apparently associated with Arambai, to leave the organisation. According to her, the outfit only wants to “safeguard the electoral interests of the

BJP”, and not “defend Manipur” as it often claims. These simmering discontents in the Valley could soon boil over until a point where Arambai faces widespread rejection from the very community that it claims to defend and represent, as has happened with many ethnic insurgent groups in the north-eastern region in the past.

A split has also emerged between the Singh government and the Manipur Police over Arambai. In February, police commandos staged an “arms down” protest after a large group of Arambai members stormed the residence of an Additional Superintendent of Police (ASP) in Imphal and abducted him. The protesting policemen alleged that their seniors had asked them to stand down even as the mob raided the ASP's house. The police even released an official statement claiming that Arambai was involved in various “anti-social activities”. Then, on May 12, the police arrested two Arambai cadres after the outfit allegedly assaulted and abducted four police personnel in Kangpokpi district a day before.

Interestingly, Manipur police often refer to Arambai cadres as just “miscreants” in social media posts and public statements, while reserving the term “militants” for the older Meitei insurgent groups and Kuki armed groups. Yet, Arambai's military dominance has dislodged the older, more established Meitei armed groups—officially called VBIGs—that are either confined to their strategic bases in Myanmar's strife-torn Sagaing Region or are partially disarmed under ceasefire pacts with the government.

While cadres from some of them, such as the PLA and KYKL, do operate in Manipur today, they have seen their influence wane as Arambai's clout rises. This could trigger turf wars between

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both sides. Arambai, however, is reported to have drawn recruits from the Pambei faction of the United National Liberation Front (UNLF), which recently signed a ceasefire agreement with the government but has reportedly continued to engage in violence. On May 2, both groups even signed an “MoU” to work together.

Notably, a joint force of the Manipur Police, the NIA and the Central Reserve Police Force recently arrested two “important” members of the UNLF(Pambei). No such action has so far been taken against Arambai’s top leadership. On May 1, according to news reports, the army arrested 11 Arambai members but had to free them when a large crowd of Meitei women blocked and heckled the convoy transporting them. This shows how the outfit enjoys a high degree of social protection in the Valley, where it is seen by many as the rightful defenders of the Meitei against Kuki-Zo aggression.

### **Two paths**

Arambai has been able to reinvent the wheel of Meitei nationalism in a way that departs from the socialist-nationalist strand of political self-determination represented by legacy Meitei armed groups. Set against a deeply fractured and turbulent landscape of inter-ethnic sparring, this is a potent formula for a group that has both the political connections and the firepower to convert thought into action.

But, from here, the Arambai story could go two ways.

One, if the State government allows the outfit to prosper, it could become a separate political entity capable of usurping the state apparatus. In fact, the Kangla Fort “oath-taking ceremony”, which saw Arambai administer a pointwise political pledge to elected lawmakers, was the outfit’s attempt to position itself as a serious political force whose mandate goes far beyond military action. The fact that it draws recruits from the lay folk, lacks a storied past, and is not led by gentrified elites makes it particularly appealing to the average Meitei

individual. Such a profile also helps the group rise above legacy politics, even while maintaining direct ties with the Meitei political establishment.

Two, once the violence abates, Arambai could quickly fade into oblivion like a shooting star. The militia in its current form, after all, is a product of the ethnic conflict. So, despite all its sociopolitical clout and military prowess, it would struggle to survive outside the active Meitei-versus-Kuki-Zo fault line. Not only would it then quickly lose social appeal, the Meitei political elite might no longer deem it useful. There is also the possibility of New Delhi losing patience and cracking down on the outfit using the AFSPA, paramilitary forces, and the Indian Army.

It is a fact that Manipur today has become a militia state, with Arambai at the centre of it all. Many have tried to dismiss it as just one of the many armed groups wreaking havoc across the State, but no other non-state armed entity in Manipur today enjoys the kind of political protection, firepower, and strategic legroom that Arambai does. The logical conclusion of this story looks dystopian, but it can be changed if both Imphal and New Delhi show political will and moral integrity.

In Manipur today, the search for the “end game” is mired in the Rashomon effect—it really depends on whom you ask. But the growth of entities like Arambai shows one thing: that there is an organised endeavour to subvert the Kuki-Zo tribal claim over their ancestral land and affirmative rights using a lingering threat of force.

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**THE BUZZ** SOCIAL MEDIA



**Sumkawn** @Sumkawn

All eyes on Rafah  
All eyes on Imphal  
But where are the eyes on Kuki-Zo-dominated areas of Kangpokpi, Manipur? This town is completely disconnected from the rest of the world  
#CyloneRemal

@HMOIndia @EU\_in\_India @MIB\_India @PMOIndia @PIBHomeAffairs @ANI @PTI\_News @EastMojo...  
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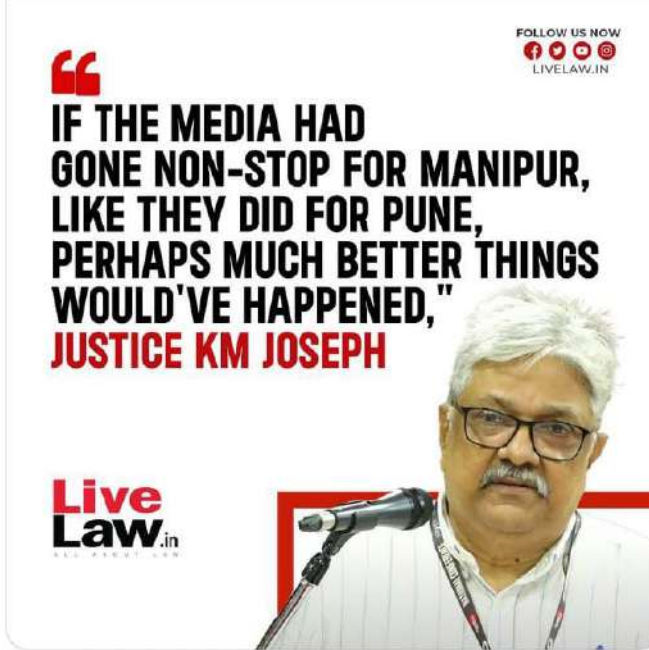


**Sushant Singh**  
@SushantSin

Follow

More than 80 interviews with PM Modi and not one has asked why he has shunned the state of Manipur and why he, his home minister and his party's CM allowed 5,500 weapons to be taken from state armouries and haven't recovered them so far?

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**Post MORTEM**

**THE 'RESPONSIBLE' RATS PROTEST**







# UNFORGETTABLE MONTH

*- Haotinmang Sitlhou*

O 3rd MAY how will I forget you.  
Oh how can I erase you from me  
How can I stop remembering??

Time comes and goes like a flowing rivers that  
never reversed back again  
May the 3rd May will be UNFORGETTABLE MONTH till  
the universe is there

Let's arise, awake and March for our  
nation(Kuki-Zo)

Let's March to protect our land that God gave to  
our forefathers and to us.

Now it is not the time to discriminate each other  
Now is the right time to stand as one and fight for  
our future generations.

The innocent blood of ours brothers and sisters  
who have gave their life seek for justice.  
Let's not delayed and let's fight back before it is  
to late.