

Thingkho Le Malcha

A Daily Newsletter by KSO Media & Documentation Cell

GENOCIDE 519 DAYS

UPON
KUKI-ZO
BY THE
MEITEI
RADICALS





KUKI VICTIMS' UPDATE

As on 11.09.2024



199
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.

AMIDST MANIPUR'S TURMOIL, TWO DETAINED MEITEI YOUTHS RELEASED ON KUKI-ZO REMEMBRANCE DAY

The world has witnessed the rarest of visuals this morning from the conflict-ridden state of Manipur—an extraordinary moment of humanity in a state torn by ethnic violence. For the first time in 17 months of conflict between the Kuki-Zo and Meitei communities, images of adversaries shaking hands and embracing in a display of compassion and ethics emerged as a beacon of hope. This momentous event occurred in the early hours of the Kuki-Zo Remembrance Day at Gamgiphai in Kangpokpi District, as Kuki-Zo Village Volunteers released two detained Meitei youths in a deeply emotional ceremony.

The two youths, both from Thoubal District, had been held since September 27 after they, along with a friend, accidentally entered Kuki-Zo territory. While their friend was released the same day with the intervention of the Committee on Tribal Unity (CoTU), the remaining two were detained due to rising tensions and security concerns.

Their release, orchestrated by the relentless efforts of CoTU, is a landmark moment that comes after the repeated failures of the Manipur state government under Chief Minister N. Biren Singh to address the escalating tensions. These failures, coupled with the state's reluctance to act decisively, forced the intervention of the central government, which ultimately brokered the resolution that led to today's breakthrough.

Manipur, long steeped in ethnic strife, has seen relations between the Kuki-Zo and Meitei communities deteriorate sharply, with violence escalating and no solutions in sight. The state government's inaction in addressing critical concerns, particularly under the leadership of Chief Minister N. Biren Singh, has only deepened the divide, leaving both communities teetering on the edge of chaos. According to Ng. Lun Kipgen, spokesperson of



CoTU, the situation had reached a breaking point, necessitating the Centre's involvement to bring about today's resolution.

The release of the two youths was not simply an act of compassion by the Kuki-Zo Village Volunteers but the result of intense and complex negotiations led by CoTU. These talks were initiated out of necessity, as the Manipur administration failed to respond adequately to mounting tensions. CoTU's involvement became even more crucial after the brutal killing of an ex-army officer in Sekmai, who had accidentally crossed into a conflict zone—an incident that only heightened fears and distrust within both communities.

CoTU, an organization dedicated to the protection and advocacy of Kuki-Zo community rights, emerged as a key player in securing the safe release of the two detained youths. From the moment the trio was taken into custody on September 27, CoTU stepped in to negotiate their release. Although they successfully facilitated the release of one youth on the same day, the detention of the other two proved far more challenging due to heightened

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concerns over community security and recent violent incidents.

Over several days, starting on September 29, CoTU held numerous rounds of talks with the Manipur Director General of Police (DGP). Despite these ongoing efforts, an agreement could not be reached immediately, as the Kuki-Zo Village Volunteers insisted on significant concessions. Their demands stemmed from the vulnerability of their communities, particularly in areas like Phailengmol, and concerns over Kuki-Zo inmates held in Sajiwa Jail under precarious conditions.

Faced with an impasse, CoTU turned to the central government for support. It was only after the Centre's intervention that progress was made. On October 2, during a pivotal meeting, the DGP, representing the Centre, agreed to key demands from the Kuki-Zo Village Volunteers. These included relocating Kuki-Zo inmates from Sajiwa Jail to safer areas under Kuki-Zo control and establishing a police station in Phailengmol, a region on the frontlines of the conflict, to ensure the safety of residents.

Speaking after the release, Ng. Lun Kipgen emphasized that today's event showcases the Kuki-Zo community's adherence to the principle of sparing innocent lives—particularly women, children, the elderly, and the vulnerable—despite the ongoing conflict. The visuals of Kuki-Zo and Meitei individuals embracing serve as a powerful reminder that even in the face of division, there remains room for humanity and ethics.

Kipgen further noted that the failure of the Manipur state government to address these long-standing issues continues to highlight the critical need for central intervention. "The Centre's involvement, which ultimately led to today's breakthrough, underscores the urgency of addressing not only immediate conflicts but also the systemic problems that have fueled Manipur's strife for years," he added.

Ng. Lun Kipgen further expressed his frustration over the misrepresentation of the Kuki-Zo community by valley-based media and the people of the valley.

He emphasized that despite the relentless efforts of civil society organizations in Sadar Hills, Kangpokpi District, and CoTU for the safe release and well-being of the two detainees, their image had been unfairly tarnished.

"Our actions, especially in situations like these, where we ensure the safety and release of the innocent duo, are often ignored or mischaracterized," Kipgen stated. "Despite our consistent adherence to humanitarian principles, our community has been painted in a negative light by media outlets based in the valley. These outlets often focus on the conflict through a biased lens, portraying us as aggressors rather than showing the truth about our efforts to protect vulnerable individuals."

Kipgen went on to explain that such biased reporting and negative mindsets have fueled further misunderstandings between the Kuki-Zo and Meitei communities, deepening the divide. "The people in the valley are often fed one-sided narratives, which only perpetuate fear and hostility towards us. It is disheartening that, even when we release detained individuals safely, such acts of humanity are overshadowed by negative portrayals of our community."

In the meantime, eleven inmates from Sajiwa Jail, who had been granted bail a month ago but remained in custody due to a lack of adequate escort arrangements, were transferred to Kangpokpi District. They were initially handed over to Sarpameina Police Station before being released into the care of CoTU.

KUKI STUDENTS' ORGANIZATION ADDRESSES ALLEGATIONS SURROUNDING ANGLO-KUKI WAR CENTENARY GATE INCIDENT

The Kuki Students' Organization, General Headquarters (KSO-GHQ), has issued a statement to clarify recent media claims regarding the Anglo-Kuki War 1917-1919 Centenary Commemoration Gate in Leisang, Churachandpur. The organization strongly refutes allegations that the gate was not burned; the claim that it was burned is a rumor or "false propaganda" spread by the Kuki-Zo community's detractors to incite further ethnic tensions. The KSO-GHQ claimed that this allegation is totally false and represents an attempt to demonize the Kuki-Zo community.

According to the KSO-GHQ, the rumors emerged following a series of events leading up to a Tribal Solidarity March organized by the All Tribal Students' Union, Manipur (ATSUM) on May 3, 2023, in response to the Meitei community's push for Scheduled Tribe status. The organization alleges that the radical Meitei group, Meitei Leepun, conspired to disrupt the rally by instigating harassment of Kuki-Zo community members traveling from valley to hill districts.

Reports indicate that prior to the solidarity march; Meitei Leepun called for a statewide bandh, effectively barring tribal participants from attending the rally. Incidents of harassment were reported, including the shutdown of the ATSUM office in Imphal and vandalism of its premises by Meitei Leepun members.

On the day of the march, tensions escalated when Kuki-Zo rallyists faced confrontations with Meitei youths in the Kangvai area, which borders Churachandpur and Bishnupur valley district. The KSO-GHQ highlighted that while attempts were made to burn the commemorative gate using old tires, local youths intervened, and preventing significant damage and ensuring the gate remained intact.

The KSO-GHQ stated that the Meitei community has long sought the removal of the gate and similar symbols



KUKI STUDENTS' ORGANISATION
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Regd. No. 2891 of 1979

1. KSO Churachandpur (Manipur)	10. KSO Assam	19. KSO Mumbai (Maharashtra)
2. KSO Sadar Hills (Manipur)	11. KSO Dibrugarh (Assam)	20. KSO Pune (Maharashtra)
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Ref. No.

PRESS COMMUNIQUE

Date03-10-2024..

The Kuki Students' Organisation, General Headquarters (KSO-GHQ) is compelled to set the record straight regarding the recent allegation circulating in media and TV discussions: **the Anglo-Kuki War 1917-1919 Centenary Commemoration Gate at Leisang, Churachandpur was not burned.** The claim that it was burned is a rumor or false propaganda spread on May 3, 2023, by the Kuki-Zo to ignite the current ethnic conflict. This allegation is totally false and represents an attempt to demonize the Kuki-Zo community.

To understand the genesis of the current conflict, it is important to note that prior to the ATSUM's call for a Tribal Solidarity March on May 3, 2023, against the majority Meitei demand for ST status, a conspiracy was hatched by a radical Meitei organization called Meitei Leepun to derail the proposed rally. Meitei Leepun called for a statewide bandh on May 2 and 3 to counter the rally; starting from May 2, 2023, tribal commuters, especially from the Kuki-Zo community, were harassed on highways by Meitei Leepun volunteers. Tribals from valley districts who traveled to their respective home districts in the hills to participate in the proposed rally were sent back or harassed in various forms. There was a prior incident involving Meitei Leepun shutting down the ATSUM office in Imphal, opposing ATSUM's democratic demands to the state government. Finally, on May 4, 2023, the ATSUM office was vandalized by the same group.

On May 3, 2023, after the Tribal Solidarity March, rallyists from Churachandpur who returned home were confronted by Meitei youths, allegedly affiliated with Meitei Leepun, in the Kangvai area bordering Churachandpur and Bishnupur valley district.

Moreover, the Anglo-Kuki War 1917-1919 Centenary Commemoration Gate at Leisang was indeed burned using old tires. While the Kuki-Zo community did not claim that the gate was reduced to ashes, some Meitei miscreants attempted to raze it to the ground and had started burning the gate using old tires. The perpetrators understood well that the gate is held dear by the Kuki-Zo people, and burning it would definitely provoke the community. When the gate's pillar was set on fire with old tires, local Meitei TV news reporters were also present at the scene. The timely intervention of youths at the site extinguished the fire, and the gate remains intact and standing tall to serve its purpose.

Prior to the conflict, the Meitei community had continuously pressured the state government to remove or dismantle the gate and any objects inscribed with "Anglo-Kuki War 1917-1919" for reasons best known to them. Intolerance toward others' history and identity is one of the factors that have contributed to this situation.

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KSO General Headquarters



of Kuki history, underscoring the need for mutual respect and understanding amid rising ethnic conflicts. They emphasized that such intolerance only fuels division and hinders reconciliation efforts in the region.

As the situation remains sensitive, the KSO-GHQ urges all parties to refrain from spreading misinformation and to engage in constructive dialogue to address the underlying issues affecting the communities involved.

MOB LOOTS 21 FIREARMS FROM UKHRUL POLICE STATION AMID LAND DISPUTE CLASH

In a violent escalation of tensions related to a land dispute, a mob stormed the Ukhrul Police Station and made off with 21 firearms, including multiple rifles and pistols. The incident follows a gunfight between residents of Hungpung and Hunphun villages in Ukhrul town yesterday.

According to sources, the attackers successfully seized a cache of weapons, including eight 9mm pistols, six INSAS rifles, three AK-47 rifles, two 9mm carbines, one SLR, and one Sten gun. In addition to the firearms, the mob also looted a significant amount of ammunition, totaling 981 rounds: 340 INSAS rounds, 250 carbine rounds, 201 rounds of 9mm, 180 rounds of AK-47, and 10 rounds of SLR.

In response to the deteriorating law and order situation, L. Kailun, the Additional Director General of Police (Law and Order), has issued an alert to senior police officials across all districts yesterday. A directive emphasized the need for heightened vigilance at police stations, outposts, and checkpoints to ensure the security of arms and ammunition.

The incident is part of a broader trend in Manipur, where there have been multiple reports of arms being looted from state armories and police facilities amid ongoing



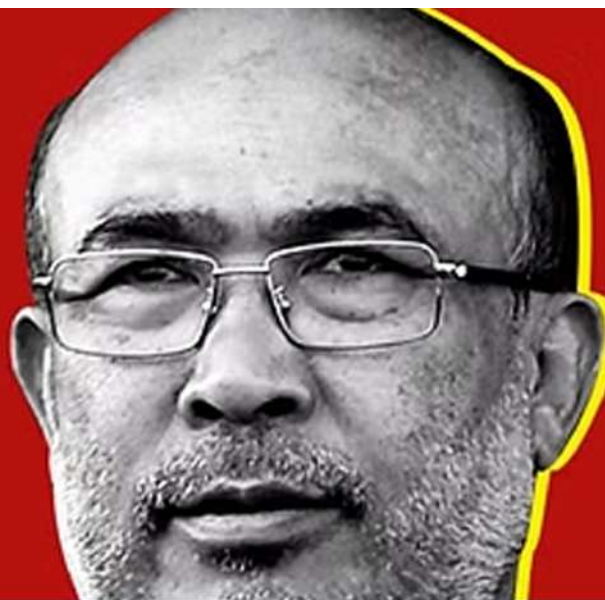
violence. A press conference on September 20 revealed that approximately 6,000 arms had been looted in the state, with 2,681 weapons recovered so far. Of these, 1,200 were identified as looted, while 1,400 were non-looted; around 800 of the non-looted weapons are considered sophisticated.

In addition, security advisor Kuldiep Singh noted the recovery of three exploded rockets and one unfired rocket, with ongoing efforts to trace their origin. Army Chief Upendra Dwivedi recently stated that about 25% of the looted weapons have been recovered, along with a significant number of locally sourced firearms.



**Don't fight for freedom, fight for justice;
and freedom is yours.**

— Zidaan Vathare



FEATURED ARTICLE

Manipur CMO's '900' Kuki Militants 'Input' Fiasco Exposes Blatant Abuse of Power

Kham Khan Suan Hausing

In what could have possibly made pundits of game theory wink in amusement, Manipur seemed to have finally found a transient solution to the rather stubborn collective action problem, which has 'allegedly' eluded the Chief Minister's Office (CMO) and the Unified Security Command headed by Kuldip Singh, its Security Advisor since the end of May last year when the Chief Minister (CM) was replaced as the head of the Command.

Notwithstanding his long-drawn grievance and concerted attempt to regain control of the unified security command in the state, CM Biren Singh seemed to have always wielded de facto final control in security-related matters which became apparent when in an unusual display of cooperation and coordination, Kuldip Singh briefed the press on 20 September, four days after the CM's office sent him and two high ranking officials of the state an 'immediate' intelligence 'input' about an impending 'national security' threat posed by the infiltration of over '900 Kuki militants' into Manipur from Myanmar.

Although this input, signed by Ningthoujam Geoffrey, the Secretary to the Chief Minister, did not specify its source(s), it was unusually pointed and precise in its brief:

Over 900 Kuki militants, newly trained in the use of drone-based bombs, projectiles, missiles and jungle warfare have entered Manipur from Myanmar'. To amplify the emergent threat, this despatch averred

that these Kuki militants 'reportedly grouped in units of 30 members each...and (are) expected to launch multiple coordinated attacks on Meitei villages around 28 September 2024 (emphasis added).

What becomes evident from this is that either in his tearing hurry to please and do his master's bidding or being arm-twisted, the Security Advisor did not bother to authenticate the credibility of the intelligence 'input' he received from the CM's office on 16 September. The Security group meeting convened by the Security Advisor two days after receipt of this input which was attended by high-ranking military and police officials in Imphal was revealing in its content and intent.

Rather than adhering to a rule-bound and institutionalised practice of first scrutinizing and establishing the credibility of the intelligence 'input' placed before them, these officials willingly reduced themselves to ignominy by readily sacrificing their agency and becoming willing partners of their political master. In doing so, the delicate balance of civil-military relations in democratic states where each is expected to remain 'autonomous' in their decision-making and actions are thrown to the winds.

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In game theory, overcoming the collective action problem and obtaining optimal outcomes in a zero-sum game requires players to cooperate and coordinate under a rule-based institutionalised framework where information inputs are credible, transparent, and not distorted. Established security protocols in that sense also demand that 'immediate' and 'secret' information of such kind are put under meticulous scrutiny and not shared with the public before credible and actionable strategies are chalked out and potential threats neutralised.

Mindful of these rules and norms-based security protocols, the Spear Corps immediately tweeted demanding details and proper scrutiny of the intelligence 'input' notwithstanding the fact that the Security Advisor audaciously claimed in his press brief that he was '100 percent correct' until proven otherwise.

That the Spear Corps could muster the spine to call out the bluff of the CM's office and the Security Advisor was remarkable. Given that the powers-that-be have for long operated with full impunity under the shadow of a compromised institutional ecosystem and the fact that they expect pliable actors to fall in line, any contrarian position is neither accepted nor tolerated. This explains why the Spear Corps' tweet was immediately taken down.

What emerges from this is that howsoever much one may like to pitch the bogey of 'national security' to elicit public attention and secure a high TRP media rating, cooperation and coordination under a non-transparent, non-credible information system is unlikely to secure an optimal 'national security' outcome. Absent this, the CM's office 'input' not only exposes the blatant misuse of a constitutional office but also represents a calibrated attempt to use 'national security' and a contrived 'threat' to the community—to which the Chief Minister belongs—to leverage a biased and partisan 'self-goal/interest'. Also evident is the sinister design to use this 'input' as a convenient scapegoat to malign and target tribal Kuki citizens as unwanted and troublesome second-class Indian citizens.

Predictably, the CM's office intelligence 'input' which explicitly castigated armed 'Kuki militants' as the source of 'threat' immediately feeds into a familiar pattern of a

trumped-up misinformation campaign and a deeply problematic narrative that is conveniently used to whip up communal frenzy among the pliable section of Meitei society. The selective targeting and maligning of the Kuki militant 'infiltrators' not only as the gravest threat to Meitei society but also as a 'national security threat' could not have come out sharper as a result.

Had the CMO's concern been a genuine one, the widely reported large-scale cross-over of proscribed Meitei armed organisations into the valley areas from Myanmar and their direct involvement in perpetuating this violence against the tribal Kuki-Zomi-Hmar would have drawn more serious attention and a coordinated response from the political and security establishment by now. By turning a blind eye to the widely reported involvement of armed groups like the United National Liberation Front (UNLF) and the Kanglei Yawol Kanba Lup (KYKL) in attacking the Kuki-Zomi-Hmar villages across the 'buffer zones' and who, for their crave for popular support, openly wear their badges and drape themselves in camouflage police uniforms, the Chief Minister and his office—and for that matter the Security Advisor—have completely lost their credibility, compromised their constitutional oath and commitments, and made their positions highly untenable.

The large-scale collusion of proscribed Meitei armed groups with the Arambai Tenggol and the Manipur police which has been widely reported in the media since the beginning of this violence last year suggests that the 'national security' gain obtained in the aftermath of 'Operation All Clear' jointly launched by the security forces in 2004 to flush out proscribed Meitei armed organisations from Sajik Tampak and the valley areas have been neutralised under the nose of the current political dispensation. The reported use of improvised explosive devices (IED) by the UNLF, one of these proscribed armed militants, in what is now known as Pherzawl district way back in 2005-06 where many tribals were trapped and killed in IED explosions demonstrated

the access that these militants have to sophisticated weapons and armoury within and across the Indo-Myanmar border.

This and the ease with which the People Liberation Army (PLA), another proscribed Meitei armed group, ambushed the military convoy of the Assam Rifles in November 2021 in Siahken, just a couple of kilometres away from the Indo-Myanmar border, and killed with impunity five of its personnel, including Colonel Viplav Tripathy, his wife and son, should still etch in our memory as a stark reminder that the unmistakable source of national security threat lies somewhere else across the Indo-Myanmar border. The recovery of a large cache of 'arms and ammunition with war-like stores' from the twelve KYKL cadres apprehended by the Spear Corps at Itham village in East Imphal district on 24 June 2023 demonstrated beyond doubt the unequal access that these militants have to sophisticated weapons and armoury.

In ignoring the above and exclusively directing the optics on the 'Kuki' militants, the CM's Office tried to tactically navigate a sensitive security terrain by misleading the Indian state and the public to up its ante against such a contrived large-scale 'infiltration' by masquerading it as 'national security threat', a language New Delhi understands best.

Clearly, this clever ploy to use 'infiltration' as a staple diet of political and national security discourse may temporarily help the CM in deflecting public attention from his direct role in perpetuating this violence to protect Meitei identity and dignity—a point that he allegedly emphasised in the leaked Manipur tapes reported by The Wire in a threepart series in the second half of August 2024. Given that the intelligence 'input' also sells easily among the deeply insecure and ill-informed public and naïve policy mandarins located in the state and in a distant New Delhi, this may also help him in building a larger-than-life image as the guarantor of 'national security' and Meitei identity and dignity.

To reinforce this image, this 'input' has been sought to be conveniently used as an excuse to 'pre-empt' the 'threat' by launching a series of pre-meditated attacks on and perpetuate atrocities against the Kuki-

Zomi-Hmar minority tribals groups in the name of 'combing operations'—a point unambiguously alluded to by Kuldip Singh in his press brief. After this 'input' has caused much bad blood across the divide, and its intent was called out by various Kuki-Zomi-Hmar civil society groups, the office of the DGP and the CM finally accepted the intelligence bluster for lack of 'substantive evidence on the ground'.

Had it not been so, the high-pitch mobilisation among radicalised Meitei armed groups and civil society groups to upscale the 'combing operations' and launch a series of 'preemptive strikes' against the Kuki-Zomi-Hmar would have escalated the violence beyond redemption.

Even as the well-oiled propaganda machine and misinformation campaign of the CM's office appear fully naked in public view, it begs us the question: how and to what extent can a democratic and constitutional state like India allow and tolerate an authoritarian populist leader to subvert institutions and established protocols with full impunity and relentlessly wage 'war' on its own citizens in the guise of securing 'national security'?

In the absence of a transparent and credible flow of information and an institutionalized system of decision-making, Manipur is not likely to overcome its collective action problem and may remain as what Mathew Arnold, the English poet, in a different context called: "... (a) darkling plain swept with confused alarms of struggle and flight, where ignorant armies clash by night"—all in the name of 'national security'.

(Kham Khan Suan Hausing is a Professor and former Head of the Department of Political Science, University of Hyderabad. He is also an Honorary Senior Fellow, Centre for Multilevel Federalism, Institute of Social Sciences, New Delhi. neither endorses nor is responsible)

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THE SOCIAL MEDIA BUZZ

Ambalica Singh @Iam_amby

Another episode of the leaked audiotapes #ManipurTapes has been released by @thewire_in. When the head of a state who's entrusted by its people to be their protector across communities chooses sides, the result is evident in manipur.thewire.in/security/manip...

@SushmaSh22
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Ravinder Kapur. @RavinderKapur2

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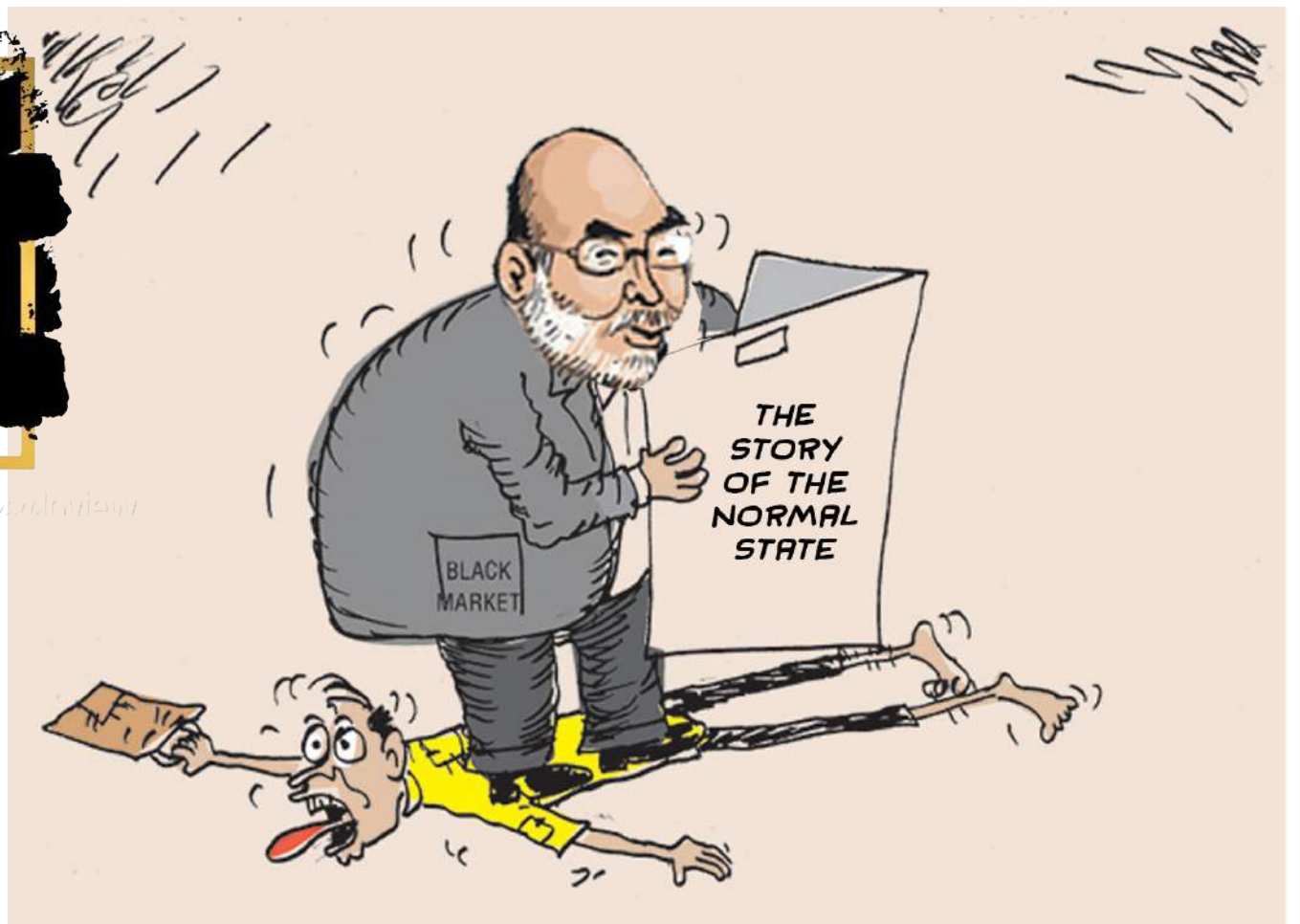
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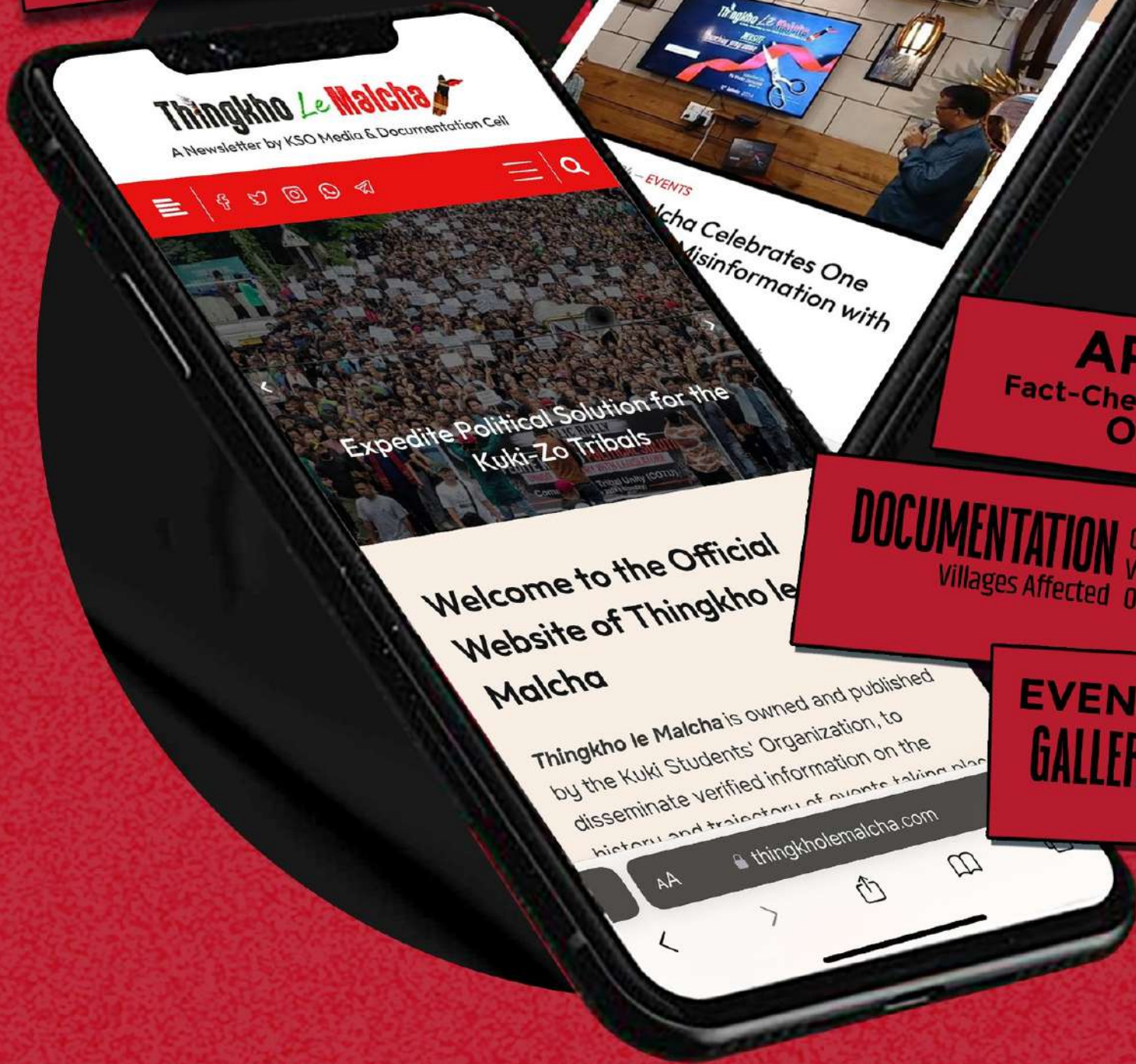
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3RD MAY 2023

A difficult truth to acknowledge,
but 3rd May 2023 day marked the humbling
moment when ego's wings were clipped,
and humility took flight within each of us.

17 months on,
Why are some of us still playing the victim card?
Why not rise up for a revolution?
Setting aside the painful memories
of the injustices we suffered,
how many of us are willing to admit:
'Oh this was my wake-up call'?

Let's take a moment today
to reflect on our vulnerabilities,
recognize the strength in humility
and rebuild with resilience.

It's time to break free,
free from the chains of resentment,
channel our energy into collective empowerment,
Forge a new path, united and strong.

Let's transform our scars into strength,
Our wounds into wisdom.
Why cling to victimhood?
Let's ignite a revolution!

~ **Sarah Chongloi**