

Thingkho *Le* Malcha

A Weekly Newsletter by KSO Media & Documentation Cell

**PRESIDENT'S RULE
ALONE
CAN'T
RESOLVE
CRISIS
IN MANIPUR**



**IN MANIPUR,
A PAWN IS SACRIFICED
TO SAVE THE KING**



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KUKI VICTIMS' UPDATE



224
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.

PRESIDENT'S RULE IMPOSED IN MANIPUR DAYS AFTER BIREN'S RESIGNATION



Imphal, February 13: In a significant political development, the President of India has issued an Order No. G.S.R. 135(E) on February 13, 2025, placing the state of Manipur under President's Rule. This move comes in response to Proclamation No. G.S.R. 134(E), also issued on the same day, under Article 356 of the Indian Constitution.

The Order outlines that the governance functions of the State of Manipur, including powers previously exercised by the state's Governor, will now be directly controlled by the President, under the guidance and supervision of the President. The Governor will continue to exercise these powers, but only as directed by the President.

Additionally, the Manipur Legislative Assembly has been placed under "suspended animation," meaning it will cease to function until further notice. This drastic measure follows concerns over the administration and governance within the state, leading to the invocation of President's Rule, which effectively dissolves the state's legislative framework temporarily.

President Droupadi Murmu imposed President's Rule in Manipur after receiving a report from the state Governor.

The decision, exercised under Article 356 of the Constitution, means that the state's administrative functions will now be directly controlled by the President through the Governor.

The proclamation, published in the Gazette of India issued by Union Home Ministry, states that the powers of the Manipur Legislative Assembly will be transferred to Parliament, effectively suspending the state government's authority.

Under this order, the Governor's powers will now be exercised by the President; the state legislature's authority will be assumed by Parliament; and specific articles of the Constitution, including those concerning legislative procedures and governance, have been suspended to ensure smooth central administration.

President's Rule is typically imposed when a state government is deemed incapable of functioning as per constitutional norms. The move follows

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political instability and law-and-order concerns in Manipur. The suspension of legislative powers means that all state laws and decisions will now be made under central authority, either by Parliament or the President.

The imposition of President's Rule can last up to six months, subject to parliamentary approval. During this period, the central government will oversee governance, and

fresh elections may be called to elect new assembly.

The move comes days after, N Biren Singh resigned from his position as the Chief Minister of Manipur on February 9. His resignation came amid prolonged ethnic violence and political instability that had plagued the state for nearly two years.

KUKI-ZO MLAs URGE POLITICAL ROADMAP FOR PEACE AFTER PRESIDENT'S RULE IN MANIPUR

Ten Kuki-Zo MLAs of Manipur welcomed the Centre's decision to place the state Assembly under Suspended Animation, further urging the Government of India to chart out a comprehensive political roadmap for lasting peace and justice.

In a joint statement, the MLAs emphasised the urgency of a negotiated settlement to address the deep-rooted crisis and called for time-bound measures to alleviate the suffering of conflict-affected and internally displaced people.

With ethnic tensions continuing to grip the state, the legislators underscored the need for decisive intervention from New Delhi to restore normalcy and protect the rights of their community.

Their appeal signals a growing demand for a political resolution that ensures stability and security for all affected populations.

As the situation in Manipur remains precarious, all eyes are now on the Centre's next move in shaping the future of the troubled state.

"We... while acknowledging the Centre's decision to place the Assembly under Suspended Animation



express hope that the Government of India would lay out a comprehensive political roadmap for peace and justice under a negotiated settlement," the statement said.

President's rule was imposed in Manipur on Thursday and the state assembly put under suspended animation, days after Chief Minister N Biren Singh resigned from his post.

"We also look forward to time-bound measures to end the sufferings that the conflict affected and internally displaced people continue to undergo," the MLAs said.

KUKI CSOs REACT TO PRESIDENT'S RULE IN MANIPUR, WELCOME CENTRAL MOVE WHILE REITERATING DEMAND FOR SEPARATE ADMINISTRATION



After the imposition of President's Rule in Manipur, various Kuki Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) have reacted to the abrupt move, welcoming the central decision while also reiterating their demand for separate administration.

The Kuki Inpi, the apex body of the Kuki tribes, has welcomed the imposition of President's Rule (PR) in Manipur, describing it as a necessary, albeit overdue, intervention. The organization highlighted that the collapse of law and order under the administration of former Chief Minister N. Biren Singh had caused severe suffering for the Kuki-Zo people. While recognizing the significance of President's Rule, the Kuki Inpi made it clear that this development does not diminish their steadfast demand for a separate administration under Article 239(A) of the Indian Constitution.

For decades, the Kuki-Zo community has endured systemic discrimination under the state government, impacting various sectors such as development, education, healthcare, and governance. The Kuki Inpi pointed to the tragic loss of hundreds of lives, including brutal acts of violence like rape and mutilation, along with the widespread destruction of villages and forced displacement as undeniable proof of the injustices inflicted upon their people.

According to the Kuki Inpi, the continued subjugation under a Meitei-dominated administration has made it clear that co-existence is no longer a feasible option. While acknowledging that the invocation of President's Rule is a step forward, they emphasized that it does not address the deeper issues at hand. True justice, they argue, can only be achieved through the formal establishment of a separate administration that ensures the security, dignity, and self-governance of the Kuki-Zo people.

The Kuki Inpi further called on the Indian government to show restraint and fairness in its dealings with their village volunteers who are protecting ancestral lands. They affirmed that the Kuki-Zo people have always adhered to the Constitution and laws of India and expect the same level of fairness in return.

Additionally, the Kuki Inpi demanded accountability regarding the reported distribution of over 5,000 government firearms and more than 6 lakh rounds of ammunition to the Arambai Tenggol, which

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have been used in attacks against their community. They called for responsible authorities to be held accountable for the security threat posed by these weapons. The organization concluded by urging the Government of India to recognize the irreparable damage done to their community and take immediate steps to implement a lasting, just solution through the establishment of a separate administration for the Kuki-Zo people.

Speaking to ThePrint, Indigenous Tribal Leaders' Forum (ITLF) spokesperson Ginza Vualzong said President's Rule is more preferable than a change in chief minister. "The Kuki-Zo do not trust Meitei anymore, so a new Meitei CM is still far from comforting."

Lun Kipgen, a spokesperson for the Committee on Tribal Unity, also welcomed the move but added that it came a "bit too late".

"After 21 months of unresolved unrest, it is the correct decision and right step towards restoring normalcy but it is a little bit too late. But we welcome it. At

least PR (President's Rule) will lay the basic foundation to restore normalcy. We have been asking for PR for a long time," he said.

Kipgen added that they had lost all faith in the state machinery. "The civilians in the valley are militarised, they have looted state armories and all this in police presence. The police have been unable to disarm them. We don't trust the state as it is complicit. Meitei civilians have been emboldened, the machinery is polarized. PR this will bring some balance."

He, however added that the larger demand for a separate administration stands. Vualzong too said President's Rule has given a ray of hope to Kukis and they believe they are now one step closer to a political solution.

"The larger demand for separate administration remains. PR is not a solution, it's a way out," said Kipgen.

KZC, KPA SLAMS BJP'S SAMBIT PATRA OVER TERRITORIAL INTEGRITY REMARKS

The Kuki-Zo Council (KZC) has sharply criticized BJP leader Sambit Patra's recent comments on Manipur's territorial integrity, accusing him of overlooking the real causes of the state's division. Patra, speaking on February 14, 2025, assured there would be "no compromise on Manipur's borders" and vowed to tackle illegal infiltration.

In response, the KZC pointed to the violence on May 3, 2023, when Meitei groups were accused of violating Manipur's territorial integrity by attacking Kuki-Zo civilians, burning churches, and displacing people. The council contends that Patra either "is unaware or has chosen to ignore" the events that led to the division of the state.

The Kuki People's Alliance (KPA), with two MLAs in the 60-member Manipur Legislative Assembly, also



criticized the BJP's stance, calling the assumption of illegal infiltration by Kuki people "blatantly false." The KPA reaffirmed its demand for a Separate Administration for the Kuki community in the state.

KUKI-ZO COUNCIL ANNOUNCES PEACEFUL RALLY ON FEBRUARY 18, DEMANDING SEPARATE ADMINISTRATION

The Kuki-Zo Council (KC) has announced a 'Peaceful Rally for Immediate Political Solution' on February 18 across all Kuki inhabited districts, aimed at urging the Central government to address their long-standing demand for a separate administration—Union Territory with Legislature.

The decision was taken during the Kuki Council's recent meeting held in Churachandpur on February 8 and 11. The Council has entrusted several frontal organisations to lead the rally in their respective regions:

1. Churachandpur – Under the aegis of Indigenous Tribal Leaders Forum (ITLF)
2. Kangpokpi – To be led by Committee on Tribal Unity (CoTU) & Kuki Inpi Sadar Hills
3. Pherzawl & Jiribam – To be led by Indigenous Tribes Advocacy Committee (ITAC), Kuki Inpi Jiribam, and allied bodies
4. Tengnoupal (Moreh) – Under Hill Tribal Council (HTC)
5. Chandel – Led by Kuki Inpi Chandel & Kuki Chief Association
6. Delhi & NCR – To be organized by KSO Delhi & NCR & Kuki Women's Forum Delhi

The rally is designed to be completely peaceful and disciplined, emphasising the community's commitment to a democratic resolution.

The key demands include:

1. Formal discussion of the Kuki issue in Parliament
2. Grant of Separate Administration (Union Territory with Legislature)
3. No Solution, No Peace
4. No Border Fencing without a political solution
5. Justice for the leaked 'Biren Audio Tapes'

An advisory for participants has also been issued:

- The rally will be conducted peacefully, with no violent demonstrations or hate speech or mentioning of individual names.
- Indian flags will be prominently displayed to emphasise the community's commitment to democratic processes.



- Protesters are encouraged to wear black attire as a mark of unity and resistance.
- A common banner, digital visuals, press statement, and memorandum will be provided by Kuki Council to ensure uniformity in the message.
- A memorandum will be submitted to the Home Minister, with each district forwarding their copy through the respective Deputy Commissioner.

The Kuki-Zo Council has called upon all community organisations and supporters to join the rally and demonstrate unwavering solidarity in their quest for justice and self-governance. The protest is expected to be one of the most organised and unified demonstrations in the ongoing movement for a separate administration.

AMNESTY URGES ACTION AS MANIPUR CM RESIGNS AMID ETHNIC VIOLENCE

In the wake of N. Biren Singh's resignation as Chief Minister of Manipur on February 9, 2025, Amnesty International has called upon Indian authorities to seize this moment to uphold human rights and bring an end to the prolonged ethnic violence in the state. Aakar Patel, chair of the board at Amnesty International India, emphasized that this transition offers a critical opportunity to break away from past violence and impunity, urging both state and central governments to address the humanitarian crisis that has displaced over 60,000 people and claimed more than 250 lives since May 2023.

The organization highlighted the failure of the Bharatiya Janata Party-led governments at both levels to curb the activities of vigilante groups and counter divisive rhetoric that has exacerbated ethnic tensions. Patel stressed the necessity for accountability, warning

that continued impunity could lead to further violations. He pointed out that while high-profile cases, such as the May 2023 gang-rape of two Kuki women involving police complicity, have received attention, many other incidents remain overlooked and demand urgent action.

Singh's resignation follows a Supreme Court directive earlier this month, which ordered a sealed-cover report from the Central Forensic Sciences Laboratory concerning audio tapes allegedly implicating him in instigating the state's ethnic violence. Amnesty International's July 2024 report documented ongoing violence and the prevailing culture of impunity in Manipur, underscoring the pressing need for comprehensive measures to restore peace and protect human rights in the region.



Hen Kuki
@HennaryL

The British knew it in 1906. The Indian govt realised it in 2023. The Meitei-led Manipur govt was never fit to rule the hills, and history proves it. With President's Rule in place, the truth is undeniable - the Meitei administration has failed, just as the British foresaw.



PMO India and 9 others

11:21 AM · Feb 16, 2025 · 592 Views

Sominthang Doungel
@sominthang

Biren is the cause of violence in Manipur. The only way he can be forgiven is deliverance of Justice by way of Union Territory with legislature for the Kukis.



5:35 PM · Jan 4, 2025 · 4,448 Views

EVEN IF BJP APPOINTS A KUKI CM, NOTHING WILL CHANGE; SEPARATION IN NATIONAL INTEREST: MANIPUR BJP MLA

Following the resignation of Manipur chief minister N. Biren Singh on February 9, there is concern over whether the Bharatiya Janata Party has really addressed the prolonged crisis in Manipur. A BJP MLA from the state, Paolienlal Haokip, in conversation with The Wire, expressed skepticism, stating that meaningful change will only occur if the Union government establishes a separate administration for the Kuki community in the hill regions.

This sentiment was visibly demonstrated on December 10, 2024, when seven BJP MLAs staged a silent protest at Delhi's Jantar Mantar. The MLAs donned black masks and refused to speak to the media. Before the protest, they had expressed dissatisfaction with the party's handling of the Manipur crisis.

Exactly two months later, Haokip, who had been one of the protesting MLAs representing the Saikot constituency in Churachandpur, criticised the government's approach to the ongoing ethnic tensions. He emphasised that Biren's resignation is insufficient.

Haokip's remarks underscore the complexities of Manipur's political landscape, where demands for autonomy now challenge the state's governance.

Assembly 'embarrassment'

Why did Biren Singh have to resign from the chief minister's post at a time when the nation saw some momentum in BJP's favour after its massive victory in Delhi on February 8? "To avoid the embarrassment of failing a floor test in the Assembly Session," Haokip said.

Two days before Biren's resignation, Congress's state president Keisham Meghachandra had demanded a floor test. In a post on X, he said, "Brahmastra missile will surely hit one of the Double Engines!".



He said that the Congress is set to move a no-confidence motion "soon."

However, soon after Biren's resignation, the Governor of Manipur, Ajay Bhalla, canceled the assembly session he had convened.

In the 60-member Manipur legislative assembly, the BJP has 37 seats. The Naga People's Front (NPF) supports the government with its five MLAs. The Janata Dal (United) or JD(U) initially had six MLAs, but five of them moved to the BJP, leaving JD(U) with one MLA.

The National People's Party (NPP), led by Meghalaya chief minister Conrad Sangma, initially supported the BJP-led government in Manipur. However, in November 2024, the NPP withdrew its support, citing Biren's failure to control the ongoing violence.

Haokip also believes that the BJP government has lost its majority in Manipur and does not have the numbers for a floor test.

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Contd.**Biren's 'riddance'**

Over the past 21 months, there have been multiple instances where BJP's own MLAs have openly opposed Biren's government. Though the BJP and its allies are well ahead of the magic number of 31, Haokip and several other MLAs believe that while the NDA holds a majority, many MLAs are against Biren.

Haokip said, "His resignation is nothing but good riddance to bad rubbish."

Violence in Manipur began on May 3, 2023. Since then, residents of the state have steadily demanded Biren's removal from power. However, the BJP leadership has largely shielded him. Haokip believes that removing Biren at this stage will not change anything.

He stated, "Whether he remains CM or not is irrelevant. The Kuki community wants a separate political and administrative unit under the Indian Union."

When asked whether he would accept a new chief minister from within the BJP, even if the person was a Meitei, Haokip responded: "Even if the BJP appoints a Kuki chief minister, it won't change anything. Total separation is in the national interest."

Notably, in January, officials from the Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) held a meeting with Kuki representatives

in Delhi. It is reported that a two-month ceasefire was proposed by the former, after which the demand for a separate administration will be considered.

The home ministry had also convened a meeting in October 2024, bringing together around 20 MLAs from the Meitei, Kuki, and Naga communities. This was the first instance since the outbreak of violence that legislators from the conflicting groups met to discuss potential solutions. The meeting, which lasted over two hours, was also attended by BJP MP Sambit Patra and senior officials from the ministry. However, both Union home minister Amit Shah and Biren were absent.

'Truth alone triumphs'

When asked whether he trusts the Union government, Haokip replied, "Satyamev Jayate. Truth alone triumphs. If they are honest in their approach, a solution can be reached."

Sources say that all BJP MLAs have been summoned to New Delhi on February 12 to discuss the selection of a new chief minister. Notably, Kuki BJP MLAs were reportedly neither contacted during the deliberations surrounding Biren's resignation nor included in the discussions for his replacement.



**Blessed are they who maintain justice,
who constantly do what is right.**

— *Psalms 106:3*

**FEATURED ARTICLE**

In Manipur, a Pawn Is Sacrificed to Save the King

Sangeeta Barooah Pisharoty

In a desperate move to save the king, a chess player often has to sacrifice a pawn. This is what has happened in Manipur.

What has been unfolding in the state since February 3, ending with the resignation of the state chief minister N. Biren Singh on the evening of February 9, can only be explained as an extended gambit by the national leadership of the Bharatiya Janata Party, to save the king.

The resignation was ostensibly a desperate move by the party's top leadership in Delhi to sidestep the opposition Congress's plan to move a no-confidence motion against the Biren Singh government when the assembly session would commence on February 10 (today). The BJP's top leadership feared that the opposition's motion would receive tacit support from several ruling party MLAs who have been seeking a change of guard since violence broke out in the state on May 3, 2023. New Delhi has been ignoring their demands thus far, driving this beleaguered group increasingly desperate for a change.

Fresh ammunition was added to the long-simmering rebellion within the ruling party in the form of a lab report on an audio tape purporting to be of Biren's voice. The prestigious private laboratory, Truth Lab, said in a report to the Supreme Court on February 3 that Biren's voice samples were a "93%" match to the voice in a leaked audio tape which brought his role in

the ethnic violence in the state under scrutiny.

The violence has so far claimed at least 250 lives, and displaced over 70,000 people belonging to the Kuki and Meitei communities. The economy of the state is in shambles. Manipur has been virtually divided into two on sharp ethnic lines.

Last year, this audio tape was submitted to the Judicial Commission on Manipur Violence set up by the Ministry of Home Affairs by person/s whose anonymity was protected by the chairperson, former chief justice of the Guwahati high court, Justice Ajai Lamba. It was told to the Commission that the recording was from the chief minister's residence sometime in 2023, when the state was in the thick of the ethnic conflict. A copy of it was also given to The Wire. Considering the immense significance of the content, The Wire had decided to bring it to the public domain.

Soon, Kuki Organisation for Human Rights (KOHUR) approached the Supreme Court seeking an independent inquiry into the audio recordings. A bench led by the then Chief Justice of India D.Y. Chandrachud asked the petitioner to authenticate the voice scientifically and submit the report to the court. Truth Lab, set up under the chairmanship of

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former Chief Justice M.N. Venkatachaliah, whose reports have been accepted by the apex court earlier, was roped in for the job. In late January, the lab certified that the voice in the audio tape and that of Biren Singh's voice samples picked up from an official function matched "93%."

This February 3, as sought by Solicitor General Tushar Mehta, the Supreme Court bench led by the new Chief Justice Sanjiv Khanna granted the government three more weeks to get the tape authenticated once more – this time by the government's Central Forensic Science Laboratory (CFSL).

However, that Singh is on borrowed time was clear as the CFSL itself had on many occasions sought assistance from the Truth Lab to establish authenticity of audio-visual material.

Party MLAs, including some senior leaders, felt that they might finally be able to hoist a rebellion strong enough for New Delhi to take note of and act on it. An earlier plan hatched by some senior party leaders to bring a no-confidence motion against the Biren Singh government was activated with help from the Manipur Congress leadership. Yet more BJP leaders upset with Biren's high-handedness shifted loyalties.

The move was not easy. In the last 21 months, Biren had, with the full backing of BJP's top leadership, ensconced himself as the only 'Meitei voice' against the minority Kukis. He has also been playing the majoritarian card to the hilt. Biren had also allegedly roped in radical and banned groups of the Meitei community to form an armed mob which acted with impunity in the aftermath of the Union home ministry's decision to lift Armed Forces (Special Powers) Act in the valley areas. Media reports said those non-state actors were seen using Manipur Police vehicles too. Hundreds of arms and ammunition were also allowed to be looted by such mobs from the state armoury.

This coup of sorts by the mob and the non-state actors took place in the presence of Biren, who had full support from New Delhi, both inside and outside the parliament. That Union home minister Shah himself batted for him gave him added confidence. Those

within and outside the party opposing Biren, and even police officials, were said to have been issued threats or assaulted by the armed groups. BJP leaders who questioned Biren ran the risk of their property being vandalised and set on flames. By instilling the fear for life and property, and with the backing of New Delhi, Biren continued to command support from the majority of his MLAs and those from the BJP's allies.

However, this time around, the rebels appear to have been able to wean away some more party MLAs to ensure that Biren would have a difficult time in cobbling together the required figure of 31 to keep him on the seat. As soon as the rebels took the desperate step of offering tacit support to the Congress' move in the coming assembly session, the central BJP leadership acted.

It also acted fast in order to keep the situation from going out of hand. Senior BJP leader Y. Khemchand was rushed to Delhi. News spread in Imphal that he was to have a closed-door meeting with Union home minister Amit Shah. Khemchand was passed a message from Shah by the state in-charge Sambit Patra. There was to be a leadership change.

On return to Imphal on February 7, Khemchand neither confirmed nor denied the national leadership's plan to remove Biren. "No comments," he told local media. But his cheery demeanour seemed to have given away that something was afoot. Reporters gave him the chase and found him not going to his own residence but to meet Speaker Thockchom Satyabrata Singh. A closed door meeting took place at the Speaker's house along with some other party MLAs opposed to Biren Singh.

Sensing the buzz, Biren, along with a set of trusted MLAs, rushed to Delhi but sources in the state BJP told this correspondent that he "failed to get an audience with Shah." Biren and his entourage then set off to attend the Kumbh Mela – perhaps

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to portray that he had little to worry about.

A clever politician, Biren knew he had to show his strength in numbers to the national leadership to be able to continue as the chief minister. He, therefore, bundled into Delhi 15 party MLAs supporting him, and another five MLAs belonging to the BJP's ally Naga People's Front (NPF). Biren also got an assurance from the five MLAs of another BJP ally, Nationalist People's Party (NPP), they they would "stay neutral" in case a floor test takes place.

On February 9, when he was finally granted an appointment by Amit Shah in Delhi, party sources told The Wire that he took along with him those 15 BJP MLAs and the five NPF MLAs to fight his case. BJP's national president J.P. Nadda was present too in the meeting. "But with no concrete proof that he has the numbers in place, the central leadership was not sure that Biren could keep the boat steady," a source said. In just 15 minutes, it was decided that Biren would have to resign.

A dejected Biren returned to Imphal and on that very evening, went to Raj Bhawan to put in his papers to governor Ajay Bhalla. He was accompanied by Sambit Patra and state president Sharada Devi, among others.

Biren made a last-ditch effort to hold on to his image of a majoritarian politician who only batted for his community during the bloody ethnic conflict, and tried to tug at the heartstrings of the Meitei community. That he wanted a hero's farewell is clear from his resignation letter. It remains to be seen how the sentiments stoked by this 'son of the soil' in the Meitei community influence Manipur's politics. This is what happened in neighbouring Assam, after former chief minister Golap Borborha stoked that feeling among the Assamese community in the 1970s to protect his chair.

Power at any cost

In this cascade of political developments, what is most noteworthy is this – in the BJP of Narendra Modi-Amit Shah era, nothing moves if the party can somehow hold on to power. Accounts of sexual assault, loss of life,

property and livelihood, mob looting arms from police stations and security forces looking with alarm at banned armed groups moving in police vehicles – all of this has scarcely made a dent.

That Biren could help BJP retain power was enough to keep him in the chief minister's chair, however inefficient he might have been in running the state in the last 21 months. That his party's government is safe was also a reason why Prime Minister Narendra Modi did not bother visiting the violence-hit state, however much the people of Manipur clamoured. Modi didn't even speak emphatically against the violence except when he was forced to utter a few lines after the horrifying video of two Kuki women being paraded naked went viral on social media.

A confirmation that Biren's resignation was a desperate attempt by Modi-Shah to help the BJP government in Manipur survive ahead of the assembly session is also in the fact that Modi's trusted man in Manipur, governor Ajay Bhalla, has revoked the order summoning the session from February 10 onwards. Clearly, Bhalla, who was the Modi government's home secretary till August 2024, is stalling the opposition from making any attempt to still go ahead with the no-confidence motion and thereby gain political advantage against the ruling party.

Though Bhalla is now in control of the state, ensuring that the party's government is safe for the time being, yet another significant move is awaited.

On March 24, when Solicitor General Tushar Mehta would have to submit the CFSL report on the audio tape to the Supreme Court, would the government still defend Biren like it did on February 3? Or would it throw him under the bus because the player has decided, once and for all, that the king has to be saved at any cost?

Published by [The Wire](#)



FEATURED ARTICLE

President's Rule Alone Can't Resolve Crisis in Manipur

Vishal Arora

Manipur's Governor has imposed President's Rule days after N. Biren Singh resigned as the Chief Minister – a belated official acknowledgment that the state government could not function according to constitutional provisions. The critical issue now is whether President's Rule can ensure that Manipur will be able to operate within the constitutional framework within its maximum allowable period of three years.

Before dwelling on the prospects of President's Rule in Manipur, let's first briefly explore what it entails, along with its provisions.

Article 356

When President's Rule is imposed under Article 356 of the Constitution, the state's governance is taken over by the central government. The legislative assembly is either dissolved or suspended, while the Governor assumes executive powers on behalf of the President. The state's administration is carried out by the Governor with the help of advisors, often retired bureaucrats and the Parliament takes over the legislative functions of the state.

The President can issue ordinances on state matters, subject to parliamentary approval. There is no elected

government during this period, meaning the Chief Minister and Council of Ministers lose their authority.

Initially, President's Rule lasts for six months but three years is the maximum duration for which it can be extended with approvals every six months from both houses of Parliament. After the first year, the extension requires not just parliamentary approval but also either that a national emergency is in effect under Article 352 of the Constitution, or that the Election Commission must certify that the conduct of elections is not feasible in the state.

The three-year limit on President's Rule is primarily based on the guidelines set by the 44th Amendment of the Constitution and further reinforced by case law, particularly the Supreme Court's judgment in the S.R. Bommai vs Union of India case (1994).

President's Rule is imposed to restore constitutional governance in a state by ensuring law and order and administrative continuity. It can be invoked

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under several circumstances apart from a political vacuum, such as when there is a severe breakdown of law and order that the state government cannot manage, when governance cannot be carried on in accordance with the provisions of the Constitution, or when internal subversion, rebellion or insurgency threatens the state's stability.

Legislators

While President's Rule has been imposed in Manipur due to the state government's inability to prove a majority in the legislature, lifting it will not only require an election but also the new government's capability to carry out constitutional governance, which fundamentally includes the functioning of the legislature. The legislature can only be said to be functioning effectively when all lawmakers are able to attend assembly sessions without fearing for their lives. This indicates that the essence of President's Rule was overlooked for nearly two years.

Since May 3, 2023, when ethnic violence broke out with the then state government allegedly supporting one party—the majority Meiteis—in the conflict, none of the 10 legislators from the minority Kuki-Zo tribal community have been able to attend the assembly sessions held subsequently.

Buffer Zones

It's not just the lawmakers. Until today, no Kuki-Zo individual—not even high officials or police officers—can safely enter areas in the Imphal Valley where the Meiteis reside. Similarly, no Meitei—including high officials—would dare to enter Kuki-Zo hills. Even Kuki-Zo personnel in the central armed forces or the Army dare not enter Meitei-dominant areas.

In fact, it was the central government that rightly established buffer zones, which serve as strict borders, between Kuki-Zo and Meitei areas within the state. These buffer zones, manned by security personnel, remain to this day, and attacks have taken place despite their existence.

The violence has resulted in at least 258 deaths, which is a highly conservative estimate, and has destroyed thousands of homes while displacing tens of thousands of people. About 6,000 weapons were looted from state armouries by extremist groups during the initial days of the violence, and the majority of those arms remain in their possession to this day.

Can we really say that constitutional governance was in effect up until the resignation of Singh as Chief Minister?

Conflict Resolution

Buffer zones can be removed and assembly sessions can proceed with full attendance only once a peace agreement is reached between the Meiteis and the Kuki-Zos. Therefore, the pressing question is whether this conflict can be resolved within three years.

Leaders of the Kuki-Zo community view the establishment of a separate administration, such as a Union territory with a legislature, as the only viable solution, particularly because they have endured what they call a carnage where the role of the state government at the time was questionable. There have been reports that sections of the state police failed to protect them during the initial days of the violence or even

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accompanied Meitei extremist groups in attacking Kuki-Zo villages thereafter.

Kuki-Zo leaders also point to leaked audio recordings, referred to as the “Manipur Tapes,” in which former Chief Minister Singh is purportedly heard boasting about his alleged role in the ethnic violence. These tapes have been submitted to the Supreme Court, accompanied by a report from an independent forensic examination as prima facie evidence. While the Court has requested a forensic analysis from a government agency, the independent forensic lab, Truth Labs Forensic Services, concluded with over 93% certainty that the voice in the recordings belongs to Singh.

When communities suffer loss of lives and property, particularly when the role of the government is suspected, there must be a tangible sense of justice among the affected individuals. Justice is generally

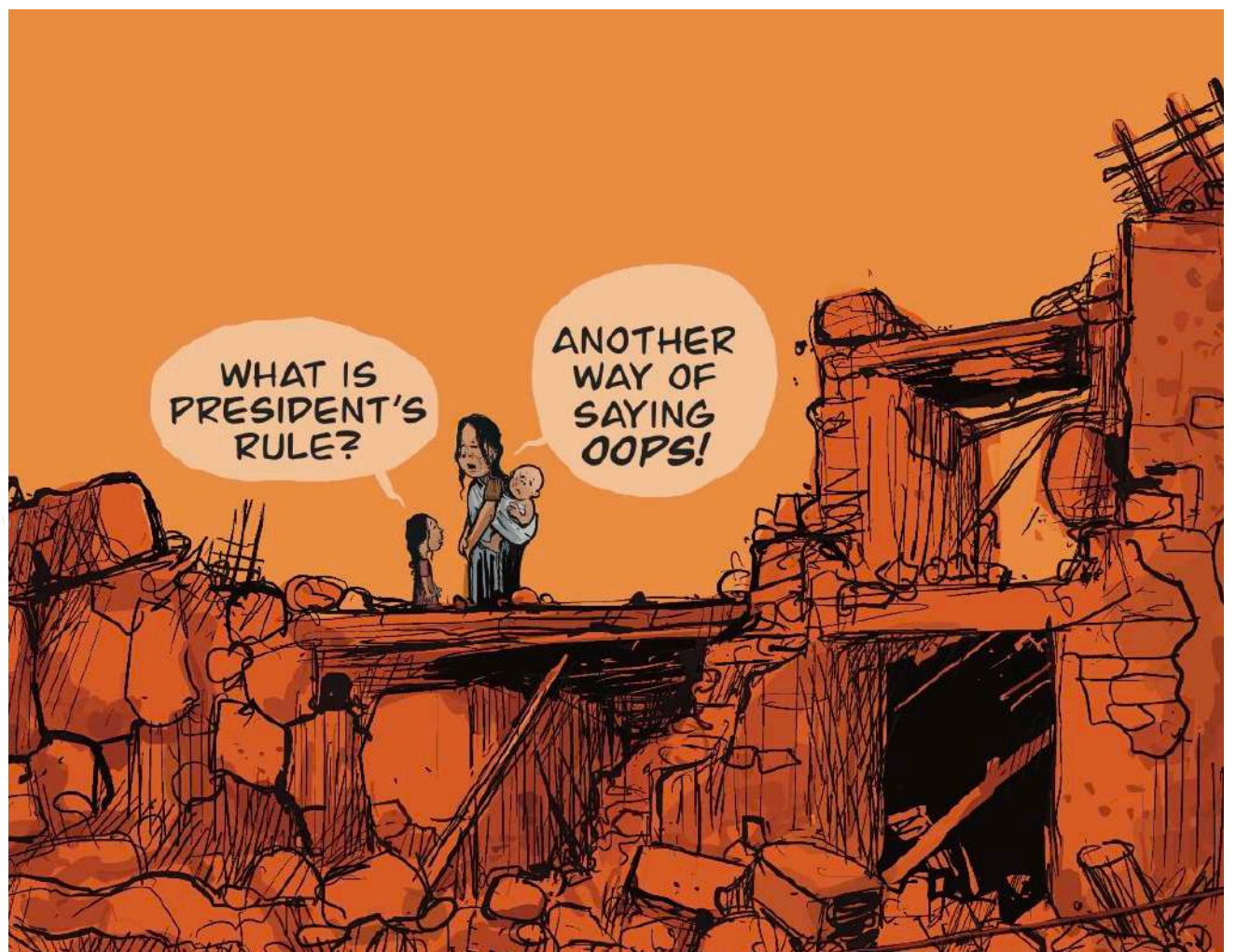
considered to have been served when specific measures are implemented. These include compensation, legal accountability, rehabilitation and support, public recognition of suffering with an apology, and structural reforms. Little progress has been made in this regard. Without the implementation of at least some of these measures, any peace proposal risks being perceived as a zero-sum game.

Until all sufferers feel that justice has been served at least to some extent, the prospects for constitutional governance in Manipur remain bleak. This should now be the main focus of the central government, as well as the Governor and his advisors.

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PRESIDENT'S RULE IN MANIPUR



Credit: Times of India



The day seems adverse
Yet beneficial , to hold on
Seeking for a demand
Buried to a losses

Victory over a giants
Plays a role of unity ' We can '
Abide regulations by leader
And motivation of ' hold on '

The once admired home
Burned into an ashes
The priceless natural beauty
Disturbed with violence

A ture patriot, betrayed
A true leaders, rebel
Agreements with stubborn
All on side evil delusional.

hold on we can

a poem by Seineo KUKI