

Thingkho Le Malcha

A Weekly Newsletter by KSO Media & Documentation Cell

MANIPUR'S TERRITORIAL INTEGRITY

A RISKY NARRATIVE

KUKIS' SELF-DEFENCE JUSTIFICATION

In attacks against Kukis, the community's need for self-defense becomes not just understandable but legally justifiable.



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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.

MANIPUR GOVERNOR VISITS CONFLICT-HIT KANGPOKPI AS KUKI-ZO LEADERS DEMAND URGENT ACTION



Kangpokpi, Feb 22: In a significant move, Manipur Governor Ajay Kumar Bhalla visited the conflict-hit Kangpokpi district today, marking his first trip to the region since assuming office. The visit underscores the government's renewed focus on addressing the concerns of the Kuki-Zo community amid ongoing ethnic tensions in the state.

Breaking from tradition, Governor Bhalla has chosen to operate from the state secretariat rather than the Raj Bhavan, signaling a hands-on approach to governance. During his visit, he inaugurated a state-of-the-art IT Centre at Presidency College, Motbung, a step aimed at fostering digital education and expanding opportunities for local youth.

Upon his arrival at Motbung Model Village, the Kuki-Zo community welcomed the Governor warmly, reflecting both high anticipation and a strong desire for dialogue.

Later, Governor Bhalla proceeded to the Deputy Commissioner's Office, where he met with key Kuki-Zo civil society organizations, including the Kuki-Zo Council (KZC), Kuki Inpi Sadar Hills, and Thadou Inpi - General Headquarters. In the presence of district

officials, including the Superintendent of Police, Kangpokpi, these organizations formally submitted a memorandum outlining their pressing demands and concerns.

The Kuki-Zo Council (KZC), in its memorandum, highlighted the dire humanitarian crisis and unresolved political issues affecting the community. Their appeal comes amid continued ethnic unrest in Manipur, which has left thousands displaced and struggling for survival.

Representing the Kuki-Zo people, the memorandum underscores the devastating impact of the 22-month-long ethnic conflict, citing loss of lives, destruction of homes and churches, and mass displacement. The KZC leaders urged the Governor to take swift action, especially in the absence of a political resolution regarding their demand for a separate administration under a Union Territory with a legislature.

The memorandum also details district-wise

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challenges in Chandel, Churachandpur, Kangpokpi, Pherzawl, Jiribam, and Tengnoupal, calling for urgent intervention.

Meanwhile, the Kuki Inpi Sadar Hills (KISH) also submitted a memorandum to Governor Bhalla, urging immediate intervention on key issues affecting the Kuki-Zo community in the wake of the ongoing ethnic conflict.

The memorandum highlights four critical demands:**Urgent Resettlement of Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs):**

The Kuki-Zo community, devastated by violence, remains displaced, with many still struggling in relief camps. KISH demands: Resettlement at approved sites under the Deputy Commissioner (DC) and Superintendent of Police (SP) of Kangpokpi District to ensure safety and stability. Adequate housing, healthcare, education, and employment opportunities for IDPs and a special rehabilitation package for families affected by violence and displacement.

Direct Access to Central Government Funding:

Development funds for Kuki-Zo-inhabited hill areas have been blocked or misallocated, leaving communities in neglect. KISH demands direct access to Central Government agencies like the North Eastern Council (NEC) and the Ministry of Tribal Affairs for infrastructure and welfare funding. Special provisions for education, healthcare, and economic development in tribal regions and a transparent monitoring system to ensure fair distribution of funds.

Expedited Political Talks for Separate Administration:

Amid continued violence and targeted attacks on the Kuki-Zo people, the memorandum strongly asserts that the community can no longer coexist under the current administrative structure. KISH calls for accelerated negotiations for a separate administration for the Kuki-Zo people and official recognition of the Kuki-Zo community's right to self-governance and political autonomy and direct engagement with the Government

of India to fast-track a political solution.

Activation of Approved Helicopter Services: The approved helicopter service for Kangpokpi has not been implemented, while alternative locations like Lairouching were prioritized instead. The memorandum demands immediate activation of helicopter services for Kangpokpi.

Expansion of air connectivity to key locations like Moreh, Lamka, and Dimapur for better access to essential services and strict monitoring to ensure the services benefit the people who need them most.

The Kuki-Zo leadership has emphasized that these demands are not just requests but urgent necessities to ensure safety, dignity, and self-determination.

With tensions still high and thousands displaced, KISH President Thangminlen Kipgen has urged Governor Bhalla to take swift action in addressing these pressing concerns.

"The survival of the Kuki-Zo people depends on the government's willingness to recognize our needs and act without delay," Kipgen stated.

As the Kuki-Zo community continues to suffer in the wake of prolonged conflict, their leaders are pressing for immediate action from both the Governor and the Central Government. The demands for security, infrastructure, and political autonomy are expected to be a major test for Manipur's administration in the coming months.

Will the Governor's intervention bring meaningful change, or will the grievances of the Kuki-Zo people remain unanswered? The response from the authorities in the coming days will determine the region's path forward.

KUKI-ZO WOMEN'S FORUM TRASHES MP BIMOL AKOIJAM'S CLAIMS ON MANIPUR CRISIS

New Delhi, Feb. 19: In a scathing rebuttal, the Kuki-Zo Women's Forum has called out Bimol Akoijam for spreading a misleading narrative about the Manipur conflict. The forum argues that the violence was premeditated and orchestrated by Meitei leadership, contradicting Akoijam's claims.

The Kuki-Zo Women's Forum (KZWF) has flayed the views expressed by Inner Manipur MP Bimol Akoijam, in a series of media interviews regarding the Manipur origin and complexity of the ongoing Manipur ethnic strife.

Accusing him of "deliberate distortion of facts" regarding the origins of the May 3, 2023, ethnic violence, the forum has said that Akoijam was engaging in "historical revisionism" to protect Meitei interests and deflect attention from the targeted ethnic attacks on the Kuki-Zo community.

"Bimol Akoijam has positioned himself as a 'neutral' commentator, but his statements reveal a clear bias," the KZWF said. "He is knowingly parroting the Meitei narrative to absolve his community of responsibility for the horrors inflicted on our people."

The forum directly refuted Akoijam's assertion that the conflict began with an unprovoked armed assault by Kuki-Zo groups. Instead, it insisted that Meitei mobs and radicalized youth groups launched the first attacks, supported by elements within the state government and security forces.

Kuki-Zo Forum Claims First Shot Came from Meitei Youth

One of the key points of contention is who fired the first shot on May 3, 2023. Akoijam, in previous statements, suggested that "Kuki-Zo militants under the Suspension of Operations (SoO) agreement opened fire first, sparking the violence."

However, KZWF countered this claim, citing video



evidence and eyewitness testimonies.

"The first shot was fired by a Meitei youth, not the Kukis," the forum stated. "There is clear video footage showing a young Meitei man firing a pistol at civilians, triggering the violence. Why does Bimol Akoijam conveniently ignore this fact?"

Additionally, the forum pointed out that several hours before the first gunfire, Meitei miscreants had already begun targeting Kuki-Zo villages.

"At around 2:30 PM on May 3, Meitei rioters set fire to the Anglo-Kuki War Centenary Gate at Leisang village," KZWF said. "This was a direct attack on Kuki identity and a deliberate provocation meant to escalate tensions."

The forum added that the arson was not an isolated incident but part of a coordinated plan to justify a large-scale attack on Kuki settlements.

"The burning of the Centenary Gate provided a pretext for what followed—a full-scale assault on Kuki villages that had been planned well in advance."

Meitei Radical Groups and State Forces Accused of Orchestrating Attacks

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KZWF went further to allege that the violence was not spontaneous but “meticulously orchestrated” by Meitei extremist groups, with the tacit support of state authorities under the then Chief Minister N. Biren Singh.

The forum named radical organizations Arambai Tenggol and Meitei Leepun as the main instigators of the attacks, accusing them of operating with impunity.

“These groups, in coordination with the state police commandos, played a direct role in the violence,” the statement read. “They were seen on the ground, armed and mobilized, alongside BJP Youth Morcha leader Barish Sharma.”

According to KZWF, Meitei mobs were armed with both traditional weapons and sophisticated firearms, suggesting that the violence was premeditated rather than reactive.

“When Kuki villagers tried to put out the fire at Leisang, they were ambushed by heavily armed Meitei assailants,” KZWF claimed. “By then, the plan was already in motion—attacks on Torbung, Kangvai, and other Kuki villages began simultaneously.”

Forum Rejects Claim That SoO Cadres Opened Fire First
Akoijam’s claim that SoO (Suspension of Operations) cadres initiated the violence was also forcefully denied by KZWF.

“If SoO cadres had actually fired first, we would have seen significantly higher casualties among the Meitei side,” the forum said. “Yet, on May 3, the overwhelming majority of the injured were Kukis, and the first confirmed fatality was also from the Kuki community.”

KZWF argued that the first casualties among the Meitei community only occurred later in the conflict, when Kuki villages fought back against the large-scale Meitei offensive.

“The violence that erupted was not a ‘clash’ between two armed groups,” the statement read. “It was an orchestrated attack aimed at driving Kukis out of the Imphal Valley.”

Ethnic Persecution Preceded May 3 Violence

KZWF also emphasized that the roots of the conflict went beyond May 3, 2023. The forum accused the Biren Singh-led BJP government of launching a systematic campaign of discrimination against the Kuki-Zo people long before the violence erupted.

“For months, Meitei organizations and state authorities were spreading hate against our people,” KZWF stated. “Biren Singh’s government carried out mass evictions, labeled Kuki-Zo people as ‘illegal immigrants,’ and incited hostility through state-backed propaganda.”

According to the forum, the May 3 violence was the culmination of a long-standing effort to erase the Kuki-Zo identity from Manipur.

“Bimol Akoijam wants to rewrite history, but we will not allow him to erase the suffering of our people,” KZWF declared.

Demand for Truth and Accountability

The Kuki-Zo Women’s Forum concluded by demanding an end to historical distortions and accountability for those responsible for the ethnic violence.

“We will not remain silent while individuals like Bimol Akoijam twist the facts to suit their political agenda,” KZWF stated. “The world needs to recognize the truth—that our people were the victims of an ethnic cleansing campaign.”

The forum also called upon national and international human rights organizations to conduct an independent investigation into the state’s complicity in the attacks.

“No amount of propaganda can erase the truth,” the statement concluded. “Justice must prevail.”

[\(Power Corridors\)](#)

BLOW TO FREE SPEECH: DELHI UNIVERSITY CANCELS SEILEN HAOKIP'S TALK AT LITERARY FESTIVAL

In a move that has ignited a debate over academic freedom and political censorship, Delhi University abruptly canceled a scheduled talk by Seilen Haokip, spokesperson for the Kuki National Organisation (KNO), at its recent literary festival. The event, held at Shri Ram College of Commerce (SRCC), was set to feature Haokip as a panelist, but organizers rescinded the invitation citing external pressures.

Haokip, who had traveled to Delhi upon accepting an email invitation from Dr. Swapan Dasgupta, expressed his disappointment in a video statement:

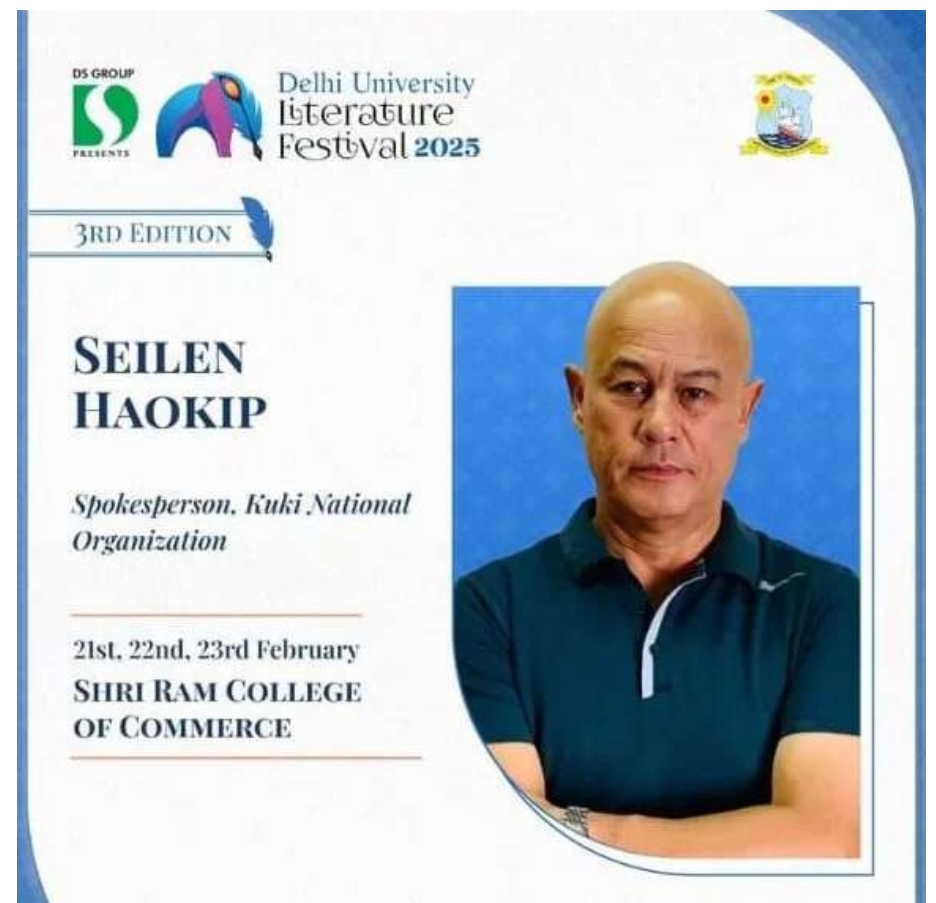
"I was invited to be a panelist by Dr. Swapan Dasgupta via email, and I gratefully accepted. I traveled to Delhi, and when I reached SRCC this morning, I was informed that, due to media publicity originating from groups like COCOMI, a festival representative asked me not to participate. It is unfortunate, but let me be clear—I did not cancel my participation."

The Coordinating Committee on Manipur Integrity (COCOMI), a Meitei civil society group, reportedly raised objections leading to the cancellation. Haokip questioned the rationale behind the decision, stating:

"If I can engage in talks with the Government of India, why am I not allowed to speak to the people of India?"

The KNO, established in 1988, is an umbrella organization representing various Kuki insurgent factions in Northeast India. Since 2008, it has been under a Suspension of Operations agreement with the Indian government, aiming for a peaceful political resolution to the Kuki insurgency.

The university's decision has drawn sharp criticism, particularly from the Kuki-Zo community, who view it as discriminatory. David Kuki, a prominent



voice on social media, labeled the festival's actions as biased and an affront to free speech.

This incident adds to a series of recent events where academic institutions have been accused of stifling dissenting voices. Earlier, Delhi University faced backlash for canceling a lecture by Professor Manoj Jha, a known critic of the current administration, without clear justification. Similarly, a poetry event on the Palestinian crisis was called off at the last minute, raising concerns about the shrinking space for diverse perspectives on campuses.

The cancellation of Haokip's talk has sparked a broader conversation about the role of universities as bastions of free thought and the increasing influence of external pressures on academic discourse.

16 WEAPONS AND AMMUNITION VOLUNTARILY SURRENDERED IN CHURACHANDPUR FOLLOWING GOVERNOR'S APPEAL



Lamka, Feb. 22: On Thursday, February 20, 2025, the Governor of Manipur, Ajay Kumar Bhalla, appealed to members of all communities to surrender looted police weapons and illegally held arms within seven days. He stated that if the weapons were not surrendered, strict action would follow for the possession of arms.

Following this appeal, the Assam Rifles, along with the Police, CRPF, State Intelligence Agencies, and State Administration, engaged with local Kuki community leaders. They addressed their security concerns, provided assurances of safety, and emphasized the positive impact of the region's de-weaponization. This engagement proved fruitful, as the community leaders volunteered to surrender a significant quantity of arms and ammunition as a stepping stone in the peace process, which has been the Central Government's stance from the beginning.

After discussions with the joint security forces and State Administration, the Kuki community leaders engaged with the local population and brought the first batch of voluntarily surrendered weapons on February 22, 2025, at Tuibong Village, Churachandpur District, Manipur.

The voluntarily surrendered looted and illegal weapons

and ammunition include a total of 16 items, such as one M-16 rifle, one 7.62 mm SLR, two AK rifles, three INSAS rifles, two M-79 40mm Under Barrel Grenade Launchers (UBGL), one 9mm Carbine machine gun, one 51 mm mortar, three .303 rifles, two single-barrel rifles, 64 gelatine sticks, ten rounds of 60 mm improvised mortar ammunition, 17 rounds of AK ammunition, 40 rounds of 5.56 mm rifle ammunition, and three 9 mm caliber ammunition. These weapons were surrendered by the Kuki community in the presence of top-ranking officials from the Assam Rifles, CRPF, State Civil Administration, Police, and State Intelligence Agencies of Churachandpur District.

A well-coordinated effort was meticulously planned by the joint forces, including Assam Rifles, Police, State Civil Administration, CRPF, and State Intelligence Agencies. This initiative is expected to motivate other groups to join the peace process, inspiring and encouraging youth to surrender arms and work toward a better future for the region's overall development, thereby enabling the peace process to bring an end to the ongoing conflict.

MIZORAM CM LALDUHOMA INAUGURATES 'UNITY BRIDGE' OVER TUIVAI RIVER CONNECTING MIZORAM WITH MANIPUR



Aizawl, Feb. 22: Mizoram Chief Minister Lalduhoma on Saturday opened a new bailey bridge over Tuivai river to connect the state with neighbouring Manipur

The 250-metre-long bailey bridge on the NH-2 (formerly 54) will link Mizoram's Aizawl district with Manipur's Pherzawl district.

"Twenty-eight years after the last bridge collapsed, the people's government today opened the new bridge to Mizoram with Manipur," the chief minister said.

Lalduhoma said the Selling (Mizoram)-Tipaimuk (Manipur) road where the bridge was located was previously under the Border Road Organisation (BRO) and was an important road linking Manipur until the bailey bridge was swept away by flood in 1997 for the second time.

Before this, the bridge constructed by the BRO was swept away by flood in 1990.

The CM said that efforts to construct a new bailey bridge by the state PWD again in 1999 could not prosper following the declaration of the Selling-Tipaimuk road as National Highway by the Centre.

He said that the Centre is now taking measures to construct a permanent bridge over the river

Lalduhoma said the ZPM government soon after assuming charge in December 2023 gave top priority to the bridge and sanctioned Rs 5 crore for the project

The bridge is named 'Unity Bridge' because it was constructed to ameliorate the connectivity crisis faced by the 'Zofate' (Mizo people) affected by the ethnic conflict in Manipur as well as to foster brotherhood ties between Mizo communities of the two states, he said.

According to officials, the construction of the newly inaugurated bailey bridge began in May last year.

Mizoram Assembly Speaker Lalbiakzama, PWD minister Vanlalhlana and chief minister's political adviser Lalmuanpuia Punte attended the function. Mizoram shares a 95-km-long border with Manipur.

The two states have two border crossing points connected by highways one is Sinzawl or Guite road linking Mizoram's Saitual district with Manipur's Churachandpur district and the other is Selling Tipaimuk road.

KUKI STUDENT BODY LEADS EDUCATION REFORM, FIGHTS EXAM MALPRACTICE HEAD-ON



Kangpokpi, Feb. 20: In a determined move to reform the education system in Sadar Hills Kangpokpi District, the Kuki Students' Organisation (KSO) Sadar Hills has stepped up its efforts to ensure a fair and transparent examination process for Class X and XII students. As part of its education policy, the student body has been actively monitoring the ongoing board examinations across the district.

KSO volunteers were stationed at various examination centers, meticulously frisking candidates at the entry gates to prevent malpractice. Their strict checking process included verifying students' identities to prevent impersonation and ensuring that no unauthorized notes, electronic devices, or other cheating materials were brought into the examination halls.

The proactive initiative by KSO Sadar Hills aims to curb the rising concerns of unfair means in examinations, which have long plagued the education system. By implementing stringent monitoring, the student body seeks to instill a culture of honesty, discipline, and academic excellence among students.

Highlighting the significance of this initiative, Lalboi Chongloi, Assistant Education Secretary of KSO Sadar

Hills, reaffirmed the organization's unwavering stance against unfair practices in examinations.

"Education is the backbone of our society. If we allow malpractices to thrive, we are compromising the future of our youth. This strict monitoring is not meant to harass students but to encourage them to uphold the values of hard work and honesty," he stated.

He further emphasized that thousands of students appearing for the Board of Secondary Education Manipur (BOSEM) and Council of Higher Secondary Education Manipur (COHSEM) examinations must earn their success through dedication and merit.

"We have witnessed how malpractice damages the credibility of our education system. It robs deserving students of their opportunities, weakens academic standards, and ultimately harms the future of our community. KSO Sadar Hills will not allow dishonesty to take root in our district. This is a battle we must fight together."

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The student body has urged all stakeholders—including teachers, parents, students, educational institutions, and policymakers—to join the fight against academic dishonesty.

“We need teachers to uphold ethical teaching practices, parents to instill discipline and integrity in their children, and students to take pride in their hard work and abilities. Civil society, institutions, and authorities must stand with us in this movement for educational reform,” Chongloi added.

He also reiterated that KSO Sadar Hills is not only working to eliminate malpractices but is also pushing forward to transform the district’s education sector into a model of excellence.

“We envision a future where students from Sadar Hills can compete at national and global levels with confidence. A future where our youth are empowered with knowledge, skills, and character. Let us reject the culture of shortcuts and dishonesty. Let us build an education system that produces true scholars, leaders, and responsible citizens.”

The initiative has been widely welcomed by parents, educators, and community stakeholders, who believe that such measures will restore the credibility of the examination system and enhance the overall quality of education in Kangpokpi District.

Backing this initiative, the SDC-HQ Kangpokpi, acting as Executive Magistrate representing the district administration, along with the Zonal Education Officer, inspected multiple examination centers across the district headquarters. Their involvement further reinforces the collective commitment to maintaining integrity in the education sector.

With the successful implementation of this initiative, KSO Sadar Hills has sent a strong message—academic dishonesty will not be tolerated. This bold step marks a crucial turning point in fostering a disciplined and merit-based education system in Kangpokpi District, paving the way for a brighter and more competitive future for its students.

MANIPUR CHIEF SECRETARY VISITS CHURACHANDPUR

Lamka, Feb. 17: Chief Secretary of Manipur, Prashant Kumar Singh (PK Singh), IAS, visited Churachandpur today to assess public life and review the district’s civic administration.

The Chief Secretary was warmly received by the District Administration, led by Deputy Commissioner, Dharun Kumar S, IAS at the Conference Hall of the Mini Secretariat, Tuibong.

During his visit, K Singh held discussions with representatives of Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) of Churachandpur and Pherzawl districts to understand local concerns. He also engaged with security officials to review the prevailing situation in the district to address issues affecting the general public.



Accompanying the Chief Secretary was Manipur Director General of Police, Shri Rajiv Singh, IPS and NK Ujjwal, IPS, IGP.

The Chief Secretary also interacted with displaced Civil Officers and Medical students.

AFTER VIDEO GOES VIRAL, FORMER HEAD OF MANIPUR BJYM SAYS HE IS FACING DEATH THREATS

Imphal, Feb. 18: Within hours of a video going viral on Monday (February 17, 2025), where he is heard alleging that former Manipur Chief Minister N. Biren Singh had made attempts on his life, and implying that Mr. Singh had engineered the conflict in the State, M. Barish Sharma, former State president of the Bharatiya Janata Party's (BJP) youth wing, the Bharatiya Janata Yuva Morcha (BJYM), on Monday (February 17, 2025) said he had been receiving death threats from certain sections of the Meitei community.

Mr. Sharma said that he had been planning to approach the police for a First Information Report (FIR) on the issue, adding that his life continued to be under threat, and that he had no police protection despite having sought it several times.

Mr. Sharma was also among the accused arrested in a firing incident in Imphal West district in October 2023.

In the video, Mr. Sharma can be heard saying that he was among "the first Meitei village volunteers to be arrested by him [Mr. Singh]". "Wherever he told us to go, we went and made war. Let me say, Biren is the one who tried to break up Manipur," Mr. Sharma said, according to a translation of his remarks, which were made in the Meitei language.

"I have received death threats about what they will do to me, and where they will throw by body, from at least five people, after the video [went viral]. These are not

Kuki people; they are Meitei," he told The Hindu over a phone interview on Monday (February 17, 2025) evening.

In October 2024 too, Mr. Sharma had alleged that he was threatened and had faced extortion by people who identified themselves as members of the 'PREPAK (People's Revolutionary Party of Kangleipak) Progressive', according to an FIR registered by the Manipur Police at the Porompat Police Station.

PREPAK is one of Manipur's proscribed valley-based insurgent groups.

Speaking to The Hindu, Mr. Sharma decried the imposition of President's Rule in the State, arguing that it was part of "politics" being played by Mr. Singh. "I don't know why this PR (public relations) is being brought in now. There should be a government in the State. We will accept anyone the Centre chooses," Mr. Sharma said.

He went on to add that many members of the BJYM, and many village volunteers, were now clueless about what to do "as there are no jobs, no opportunities". "Like everyone else, we have been used and thrown," he said.



When you have a dream, you've got to grab it and never let go.

— *Carol Burnett*



FEATURED ARTICLE

Manipur's 'Territorial Integrity' Is a Risky Narrative

The Demand for a 'Separate Administration' Has a Stronger Constitutional Basis

Vishal Arora

In his resignation letter, former Manipur Chief Minister N. Biren Singh urged the Central government to protect the state's "territorial integrity." And then days after President's Rule was imposed, his BJP colleague Sambit Patra gave the same assurance. Both politicians seem to have ignored the risks of refusing to consider state reorganisation, which is not the same as separatism.

'Territorial Integrity'

In international law, territorial integrity would mean a country's right to "sovereignty" over its entire territory, prohibiting external interference or attempts to alter its borders. In Manipur, the term refers to preserving the territory of the state as it existed at the end of the British Raj in 1947.

Protecting a state's "territorial integrity" is largely a political concern with little constitutional basis. In Manipur, the only state currently using this term, it reflects the concerns of the majority Meitei community, which makes up about 53% of the population.

Leading the territorial integrity narrative is COCOMI. It stands for the Coordinating Committee on Manipur Integrity, a civil society umbrella group that opposes the current demands of the minority Kuki-Zo tribal community for state reorganisation and previously resisted similar demands from the Naga tribal

community.

Therefore, Patra, a Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) parliamentarian representing a constituency in Odisha, sounded like COCOMI when he told ANI: "As far as the BJP is concerned, we are committed to ... maintaining the territorial integrity of Manipur."

COCOMI

COCOMI was established in 2019 in response to concerns over the Naga peace talks between the Government of India and the NSCN-IM, which many in Manipur feared could alter the state's territorial boundaries to accommodate Naga demands for a "Greater Nagaland" or "Nagalim."

The Naga demands at the time pertained to hill districts such as Ukhrul, Tamenglong, Senapati and Chandel—areas distinct from the Meitei-majority regions of the Imphal Valley. Similarly, the Kuki-Zo demand for a Union Territory with a legislature, as a response to ongoing violent ethnic tensions, concerns areas where they live and already have a degree of autonomy.

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As we may know, Manipur's valley region, which serves as the state's economic and political hub, has been predominantly inhabited by the Meitei community. The surrounding hill areas are home to the Kuki-Zo and Naga communities, each with distinct traditions and governance systems.

The insistence on maintaining "territorial integrity" may suggest that the existing territory was historically unified, but that is apparently not the case.

Manipur's History

Before British rule, Manipur was an independent princely state ruled by the Meitei kings, with the Kangla Fort in Imphal as its political centre. However, the territory of the Meitei kingdom was historically limited to the Imphal Valley, while the surrounding hill areas, inhabited by Naga and Kuki-Zo tribes, were largely autonomous and not under direct Meitei control.

During the colonial rule, Manipur became a princely state under British suzerainty after the Anglo-Manipur War of 1891. The British administered the hill areas separately from the Meitei-dominated valley under an "Excluded Areas" policy, recognising that the tribal regions had their own chieftainship-based governance. The Kukis, for instance, had an independent socio-political structure under hereditary chiefs, and the Nagas also had a distinct tribal system.

After the 1947 independence and until 1949, Manipur had an elected assembly under a democratic constitution. Under the Manipur State Constitution Act of 1947, the hill areas were integrated into the state's political framework for the first time. The Act established a State Assembly with a total of 53 seats, allocating 18 seats specifically to representatives from the hill regions. Matters specifically concerning the hill areas were addressed through the Manipur State Hill (Administration) Regulation of 1947, which reserved certain powers for local authorities in the hills.

In 1949, Manipur became part of India after its Maharaja,

Bodhachandra Singh, signed the Merger Agreement with the Government of India. The Maharaja was allegedly pressured by the Indian government into signing the Instrument of Accession, according to some accounts, a claim New Delhi has denied.

From 1949 to 1956, Manipur was a "Part C" state under direct control of the Government of India, under Article 239 of the Indian Constitution. It was a Union Territory from 1956 to 1972, when it attained full statehood. For Manipur's transition to full statehood, Article 371C was introduced through the 27th Amendment Act of 1971.

This Article provided for special provisions concerning the administration of the state's hill areas, based on which the Manipur (Hill Areas) District Council Act of 1971 was enacted, establishing six Autonomous District Councils (ADCs) in the hill regions. These councils were intended to facilitate self-governance and address the specific needs of the tribal communities. They were empowered to manage local affairs, including matters related to land, resources and cultural practices.

Article 371C also empowers the President of India to establish a separate committee within the Manipur Legislative Assembly, consisting of members elected from the Hill Areas. The Governor of Manipur is given a special responsibility to oversee its functioning and must submit annual reports to the President on the administration of the Hill Areas.

Territorial Reorganisation

This suggests that, in theory, the case for a separate administration for the Kuki-Zo hill areas may be stronger than previous state bifurcations in the country, such as Uttar Pradesh and Uttarakhand, Bihar and Jharkhand, or Andhra Pradesh and

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Telangana. More recently, Jammu and Kashmir and Ladakh were declared Union Territories. Territorial reorganisation is not unprecedented in India, to say the least.

While in some cases, statehood movements have coincided with armed struggles, the demand itself is not illegal or unconstitutional.

The Constitution does not prohibit people from advocating for new states. Article 3 of the Constitution empowers Parliament to create new states, alter existing state boundaries or change state names. The process does not require the concerned state's consent, though the President must refer the proposal to the state legislature for its views. However, these views are not binding on Parliament.

Further, the Supreme Court has repeatedly upheld Parliament's power under Article 3, making it clear that no state has absolute territorial rights.

In the 1960 case of *Babulal Parate v. State of Bombay*, the Court ruled that while state legislatures must be consulted, their views do not limit Parliament's authority to reorganise states. In the 1963 case of *State of West Bengal v. Union of India*, the Court held that Indian states do not have sovereignty akin to federal units in the United States.

These legal interpretations make it clear that no state's boundaries are permanent under the Constitution.

Kuki-Zo Demand

Regarding the Kuki-Zo demand for separation from Manipur, it is rooted in the ethnic violence that began on May 3, 2023, and continues sporadically until today.

Allegations have been made that the state government under Singh not only allowed the violence but actively participated in and supported it. While this cannot be stated with certainty in official terms, prima facie

evidence exists—news reports have documented sections of the state police accompanying mobs that attacked Kuki-Zo areas, and Singh has purportedly admitted to his role in the “Manipur Tapes,” leaked audio recordings attributed to him, which are under examination by the Supreme Court.

The divide in Manipur is now so deep that no Kuki-Zo individual, including high officials or police officers, can safely enter Imphal Valley, just as no Meitei, including officials, dares to enter Kuki-Zo-dominated hill areas. Even Kuki-Zo personnel in the central armed forces or the Army avoid Meitei areas. The central government itself has established buffer zones within the state, effectively acting as internal borders between the two communities.

At least 258 people have been killed while thousands of homes have been destroyed, displacing tens of thousands. Around 6,000 weapons were looted from state armories, mostly in the valley region, in the early days of the conflict, and most remain in the hands of extremist groups.

Therefore, the Kuki-Zo demand seems more understandable than COCOMI's rhetoric, which, while strongly regionalist, does not openly call for secession from India. However, its rigid opposition to any division of Manipur risks being seen as defiance of the Indian state's authority under Article 3 of the Constitution.

Asserting that Manipur's territory is non-negotiable, regardless of parliamentary decisions, raises questions about whether this stance indirectly challenges Parliament's constitutional power to reorganise states. This applies not only to COCOMI but also to Singh and Patra.

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OPINION

Kukis' Self-Defence Justification

B. Gunlien

A Question of Survival and Security

The recent appeal by the Governor of Manipur urging both hill and valley-based armed groups to surrender their weapons within seven days raises serious concerns, especially for the Kuki-Zo tribal community. For the past 19 months, Kukis have suffered relentless attacks orchestrated by radical Meitei groups like Arambai Tenggol and Meitei Leepun, along with banned valley-based insurgent groups. Entire villages have been burned, families displaced, and hundreds of innocent lives lost.

Demanding that the Kukis lay down their arms without first ensuring the disarmament of separatist Meitei militants and their associated cultural militias is not just unfair—it's a direct threat to the safety and survival of the Kuki-Zo people.

Constitutional Validity: The Right to Self-Defense

The Indian Constitution guarantees every citizen the fundamental right to life and personal liberty under Article 21. This right naturally includes self-defense, especially when the State fails to provide security. When law enforcement has either been ineffective—or, worse, complicit—in attacks against Kukis, the community's need for self-defense becomes not just understandable but legally justifiable.

The Supreme Court of India has repeatedly upheld the right to self-defense in cases where there is a genuine threat to life and property. Given the continued assaults on Kuki villages, surrendering arms under the present circumstances would strip the community of its last means of protection, leaving them vulnerable to future attacks by hostile Meitei militias.

Why Kukis Took Up Arms in the first place?

May 3-5, 2023 – The Genocide in Imphal: Meitei mobs, backed by N. Biren Singh's private militia Arambai Tenggol and Meitei Leepun, unleashed brutal violence against Kukis. Men were lynched, women were assaulted, and the police either watched passively or actively assisted the attackers.

Destruction of Kuki Homes in Imphal: Hundreds of Kuki families were forcibly evicted, their homes torched, while the authorities failed to intervene.

Continued Attacks on Border Villages: Kuki settlements on the borders have been under constant assault by Meitei groups seeking to expand their territory. In response, Kukis have had no choice but to establish self-defense mechanisms in these vulnerable areas.

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Complicity of State Forces: There have been multiple incidents where state police either handed over Kuki villagers to Meitei mobs or deliberately withdrew to allow attacks to take place. This has further deepened the community's distrust in state protection. Until those responsible for these atrocities are held accountable and the separatist Meitei groups are fully disarmed, expecting Kukis to surrender their weapons is equivalent to leaving them defenseless.

Separatist Meitei Groups: The Real Threat

Arambai Tenggol: This extremist group openly brandishes weapons and has openly called for the ethnic cleansing of Kukis. They operate with complete impunity in Imphal and other areas.

Meitei Leepun: While claiming to be a cultural organization, this group functions as a vigilante force, frequently targeting Kuki settlements under the guise of "protecting Meitei interests."

UNLF, PLA, PREPAK: These long-standing separatist groups advocate for Manipur's secession from India and maintain sophisticated weaponry. Their collaboration with cultural militias creates a dangerous mix of insurgency and ethnic violence.

Why Kukis Must Guard Their Borders

The porous borders between Kuki-dominated hills and Meitei-dominated valleys are frequently exploited by radical Meitei groups to stage attacks. Until these groups are dismantled, Kukis must retain their ability to defend their homes. Disarming them prematurely would only embolden Meitei militants, leading to further bloodshed.

The Governor's Responsibility: Who Will Ensure Safety?

If the Governor insists on disarmament, who will guarantee that no Kuki lives will be lost to future attacks? If another massacre occurs after this forced surrender, will the state take responsibility? The grim reality is that past victims of Kuki violence have received

no justice, and their attackers continue to roam free.

Points the Governor Must Consider

Peace Must Follow Justice: True peace cannot be achieved by disarming the victims while the aggressors remain armed. Justice and accountability must come first.

Confidence-Building Measures Are Essential:

Deploy neutral security forces, such as the Assam Rifles, along sensitive borders. Disarm Meitei armed groups and prosecute those responsible for past violence before asking Kukis to surrender their weapons.

A Human Rights Perspective: The United Nations recognizes the right of indigenous communities to defend themselves when the state fails to protect them. Forcing Kukis to disarm without ensuring their security violates their fundamental right to self-preservation.

Disarmament Should Be the Final Step, Not the First

Laying down arms must be the last step in a genuine peace process—not the first. Disarming both victims and aggressors simultaneously will only perpetuate the cycle of violence. Until separatist Meitei groups, their cultural militias, and armed mobs are neutralized, the Kukis must retain their right to protect their lives and communities.

Anything less would be a betrayal of justice, human rights, and the very principles enshrined in the Indian Constitution. The Governor and the government must rethink their approach—security, justice, and accountability must come first. Otherwise, this so-called "peace process" will be nothing more than a prelude to yet another massacre, whether tomorrow, years from now, or even decades down the line.

THE SOCIAL MEDIA BUZZ



Adv. Siam Phaipi
@SiamPhaipi

Delhi University and @dulitfest have now bowed before COCOMI !? A very racist Meitei Radical organisation who is hell bent on villifying and demonizing the Kuki Zo Tribals since the past 2 years of this Manipur Violence !

#Manipur #DU #delhiuniversity

POWER CORRIDORS @power_corri... · 4h

Blow to Free Speech: DU Cancels Seilen Haokip's Talk at Lit Fest
#FreeSpeechUnderThreat #DUControversy
#SeilenHaokipBan #KNOatLitFest
#AcademicFreedom #ManipurConflict pow...

6:20 pm · 23 Feb 25 · 302 Views



H S Benjamin M...
@BenjaminMate1

Retd Additional Director General of @BSF_India Shri Sanjiv Krishan Sood, categorically debunked the unfounded allegations against Kuki-Zo community as illegal immigrants & drugs smugglers with facts and official data.



Last edited 10:11 pm · 22 Feb 25



MANIPUR'S MUSICAL CHAIR





THROUGH ICE AND FIRE: The Kuki Warrior's Path

The frost bites deep in the mountain's breast,
Where Kuki hearts find no place for rest.
Beneath the weight of an endless sky;
Snowflakes fall like a mourner's cry!

Yet still they march, in silence proud,
Each breath a ghost, each step a vow.
Through bitter nights and frozen rain;
They bear the weight of untold pain.

For in their hearts, a flame still burns,
A dream of home to which they yearn.
Though winter's claws may tear the skin,
The Kuki soul endures within!

The land of hills, the hearth's warm glow,
Call to them softly through the snow.
And so, they fight, and so they stand.
A people strong, united, grand.

Through icy winds and battle's roar,
The Kuki warriors strive once more.
Their spirits rise, though bodies tired;
For freedom's song is their desire!

~ Mr. S. Sonminthang Mate