

Thingkho *Le* Malcha

A Weekly Newsletter by KSO Media & Documentation Cell

FAIR WELL

BIREN'S SHADOW BIREN'S STORIES

FOR A JUST PEACE IN MANIPUR

To restore peace in Manipur, there is a need to ensure accountability and justice.



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KUKI VICTIMS' UPDATE

As on 09. 03. 2025



226
DEATHS

* Lalgouthang Singnit



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.

KUKI-ZO COUNCIL LIFTS INDEFINITE SHUTDOWN, BUT VOWS TO OPPOSE FREE MOVEMENT POLICY

Kangpokpi, March 16: The Kuki-Zo apex body, the Kuki-Zo Council (KZC), has officially lifted the indefinite shutdown that was previously called by the Kuki-Zo Council. The shutdown, which had paralyzed the region, has now been lifted starting from 7:30 PM on March 13, 2025, following extensive deliberations.

However, the Kuki-Zo Council made it clear that the lifting of the shutdown does not mean the community will ease its opposition to the recently announced Free Movement policy by the Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA). The Council strongly opposes the policy, describing it as detrimental to the justice process for the Kuki-Zo people. "Until justice is duly served, any move towards unrestricted free movement will be vehemently opposed," the KZC emphasized.

The Kuki-Zo Council remains resolute in its commitment to ensuring that the sacrifices of their martyrs, including Lalgouthang Singsit, are honored through the achievement of rightful justice. The community continues to demand a separate political administration to ensure justice, peace, and progress for the Kuki-Zo people.

In their statement, the KZC called on all relevant authorities to recognize and respect the legitimate demands of the Kuki-Zo community and work towards a peaceful resolution that brings justice and security.

Blockade of National Highway-2 Continues Amid Demands

The Kuki-Zo Council is continuing its blockade of National Highway-2 (NH-2) until its core demands are met. This blockade, which has left hundreds of trucks and buses stranded in Senapati district, has caused major disruptions to the supply of food, fuel, and medical essentials. The situation worsened after the



death of a Kuki youth during security force firing on March 8, which prompted the Committee of Tribal Unity (COTU) to halt all vehicular movement on NH-2.

The Kuki-Zo leadership met with a high-level delegation from the Union Home Ministry, led by Advisor (Northeast) AK Mishra, on March 11, marking the first direct engagement between the Kuki-Zo leadership and the central government since the imposition of President's Rule in Manipur. During this meeting, the KZC reiterated that the blockade would only be lifted after the transfer of Kangpokpi Superintendent of Police (SP) Manoj Prabhakar, whom they accuse of using excessive force against Kuki-Zo protesters.

Demand for SP Transfer and Restoration of Security Checkpoints

The Kuki-Zo Council has made it clear that the transfer of SP Manoj Prabhakar is a crucial step in resolving the ongoing deadlock. They claim that Prabhakar has used excessive force, including live ammunition, against Kuki-Zo protesters, and that his actions are exacerbating tensions in the region. The KZC has also pointed to previous incidents, such as the

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assault on Kuki-Zo women in Saibol on December 26, 2024, which led to clashes with security forces.

In addition to the demand for the SP's transfer, the KZC is calling for the restoration of security checkpoints along NH-2, which were previously dismantled by security forces. These checkpoints should be manned either by Kuki-Zo police or Assam Rifles to ensure the safety of the community. The KZC is open to the movement of public transport and commercial vehicles on NH-2, but insists that no private vehicles be allowed due to security concerns.

Cessation of Hostilities Agreement Sought

The Kuki-Zo Council has also called for a cessation of hostilities agreement between the Kuki-Zo and Meitei communities, mediated by the Ministry of Home Affairs.

The Council insists that neither side should resort to violence or provocation, citing the traumatic events of May 3, 2023, when the Kuki-Zo community faced violent attacks. "We are ready for peace, but now the ball is in the court of the Home Ministry and the Meiteis," a KZC official stated.

Ongoing Tensions and Prospects for Peace Talks

Although discussions between the Kuki-Zo Council and the Home Ministry are ongoing, no immediate breakthrough has been achieved. The KZC has made it clear that they will not back down from their demands, and tensions remain high on the ground as the blockade continues. The Union Home Ministry is expected to respond to the KZC's demands in the coming days.

WHY MANIPUR NOT ON ITINERARY: CONGRESS ON AMIT SHAH'S ASSAM, MIZORAM VISIT

New Delhi, Mar 13: With Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma announcing that Union Home Minister Amit Shah would make a three-day visit to his state and Mizoram, the Congress on Thursday asked why Manipur was not on the itinerary.

Sarma said the Union home minister would arrive in Jorhat late on Friday for a three-day visit to Assam and Mizoram.

Shortly after arriving in Jorhat, the home minister will travel to Dergaon in Golaghat district, where he will spend the night at the Lachit Barphukan Police Academy, Sarma said while briefing reporters.

Congress general secretary in-charge communications Jairam Ramesh said, "The Assam chief minister has just announced that the Union home minister will be making a three-day visit to Assam and Mizoram,

beginning March 14.

But why is Manipur not on his itinerary?" The Congress has been attacking Prime Minister Narendra Modi as well for not visiting Manipur, besides slamming the Centre for its handling of the situation in the ethnic strife-torn northeastern state.

The party had on Tuesday taken a swipe at Modi over his Mauritius trip, saying it was "frequent-flyer time" even as the people of Manipur continued to wait for his visit.

More than 220 people have been killed and thousands rendered homeless in ethnic violence between the Imphal Valley-based Meiteis and the adjoining hills-based Kuki-Zo groups since May 2023.

KUKI-ZO COMMUNITY BIDS HEART-WRENCHING FAREWELL TO LALGOUTHANG SINGSIT



Kangpokpi, March 14: The air in Keithelmanbi was heavy with sorrow as the Kuki-Zo community bid a final, tearful farewell to their fallen hero, Lalgouthang Singsit. To them, he was not just a victim but a martyr, whose life was brutally taken by security forces on March 8 during the Centre's controversial Free Movement policy enforcement. His sacrifice has left an unhealable wound in the hearts of his people.

For five agonizing days, his lifeless body lay unclaimed in the District Hospital Morgue, a painful symbol of his community's defiance and demand for justice. The Kuki-Zo people stood firm, refusing to claim him until the government canceled the contentious Free Movement policy and ordered a judicial inquiry into Kangpokpi's Superintendent of Police, alongside his immediate transfer. But their cries for justice fell on deaf ears.

Yesterday, after a crucial joint meeting, Kuki-Zo leaders made the heartbreaking decision to bring him home. The sight of his body returning to Keithelmanbi was too much to bear—grief-stricken loved ones, shattered by the weight of injustice, mourned a life stolen too soon.

His funeral was attended by Local MLA Nemcha Kipgen, members of the Kuki-Zo Council, leaders of CoTU, Kuki Inpi, Thadou Inpi, various tribal organizations, and thousands of Kuki-Zo people from across the district.

At his Keithelmanbi residence, amid sobs and prayers, the community gathered for one last goodbye, honoring the man they believe died fighting for their future.

Later, in a display of unity and grief, the Kuki-Zo community held a coffin rally, carrying Lalgouthang's body through the streets, draped in mourning black, all the way to the Martyrs' Cemetery in Phaijang. The air was filled with solemn hymns and prayers, an overwhelming sense of loss gripping every heart.

In a final, gut-wrenching tribute, the Kuki-Zo Village Volunteers stood before his grave, their hands trembling but their resolve unshaken, as they fired a gun salute—a farewell worthy of a warrior. And then, with heavy hearts, they laid him to rest.

Even in his burial, Lalgouthang's fight is far from over. As his people mourn, the Kuki-Zo Council convened a crucial late-night meeting at 6:30 PM at Kangpokpi District Headquarters, deliberating on the fate of the indefinite total shutdown imposed across all Kuki-Zo areas. The question remains—will the shutdown continue as a mark of defiance, or will his people choose another path forward?

MANIPUR MP ARTHUR SLAMS BUDGET AS “ANTI-PEOPLE” FOR IGNORING 60,000 DISPLACED CITIZENS

Kangpokpi, Mar 09: Outer Manipur MP Alfred Kangam Arthur has strongly criticised the Manipur Budget, labeling it “anti-people” for failing to address the needs of over 60,000 people displaced due to ethnic clashes in the state. The MP emphasised that the budget neglects those who have lost their livelihoods, homes, and suffered damage worth over Rs 20,000 crore.

“I implore the conscience of this House once again. Give me the privilege of relinquishing my seat, and I will not return. It is painful to come here, speak repeatedly, and not be heard. It is equally painful to see that my words are not translated into action on the ground. To return home to an empty house, knowing that today’s budget fails to address the needs of those affected, is unbearable,” Arthur said.

The MP also pointed out that the budget lacks a separate section for the hills and valley, a mandatory provision. He questioned how the allocation of funds would be determined without this separation.

He requested the Finance Minister to reconsider the budget and allocate funds to support the affected communities.

“I request the Honourable Finance Minister to put this off and bring the actual budget so that we can go into



the discussion of what is going to the hills and valley,” Arthur said.

The outer Manipur MP even accused the central government of not releasing the pending dues of NREGA. “The marginalised and poor of my constituency survive on NREGA, of which 50 per cent material component of 2023-24 has not been released and dues for 2 years have not been cleared,” he said.

He also criticised the Centre for not clearing payments for social assistance programmes, which has left the most vulnerable populations without aid.



You can't truly call yourself 'peaceful' unless you are capable of great violence. If you're not capable of violence, you're not peaceful, you're harmless.

KOHUR, KZWF DECRY ASSAM RIFLES ATTACKS ON SELF-DEFENSE GROUPS

New Delhi, March 13: The Kuki Organisation for Human Rights Trust (KOHUR) and the Kuki-Zo Women's Forum have strongly condemned the alleged unprovoked attack by the 26th Sector of the Assam Rifles against Kuki village volunteers in Laijang Village, Chandel District, Manipur, on March 12, 2025.

According to reports, the attack, which targeted Kuki self-defense groups known as the Village Volunteers, has caused significant unrest among the Kuki-Zo population in Manipur. Social media has been abuzz with allegations that the Assam Rifles used drones in the assault, a claim echoed by the Kuki-Zo Women's Forum. However, official confirmation of drone use remains unavailable.

KOHUR Calls the Attack Unjust

In a statement, KOHUR condemned the Assam Rifles' actions as a "disproportionate and unjustifiable" use of force against village volunteers engaged in self-defense. The organization emphasized that these volunteers are not aggressors but civilians compelled to take up arms to protect their communities from continued violence by Meitei extremist groups.

"Manipur is experiencing a devastating ethnic conflict, with Kuki tribal communities suffering targeted violence at the hands of the majority Meitei community," KOHUR stated. "Thousands of Kukis have been displaced, villages destroyed, and innocent lives lost. Instead of addressing the failure of the state to protect vulnerable tribal populations, security forces are disproportionately targeting Kuki self-defense groups while allowing extremist elements among the Meiteis to act with impunity."

KOHUR also criticized the failure to disarm Meitei extremist groups, such as the Arambai Tengols, who reportedly looted thousands of weapons from state armories. The group called this a glaring double standard that must be immediately rectified.



KOHUR
Kuki Organization for Human Rights Trust

Concerns Over Assam Rifles' Neutrality

KOHUR acknowledged the historical role of the Assam Rifles in safeguarding tribal communities but expressed concerns over their current operations. "While the Assam Rifles has played a critical role in maintaining peace, its posturing in Laijang Village raises serious questions about its neutrality and broader political influences at play," the statement read.

KOHUR urged the Assam Rifles to exercise restraint and prioritize dialogue over militarized actions. "Any action against Kuki village volunteers should only follow the immediate disarmament of Meitei extremist groups, who have been the primary instigators of violence," the organization added.

Kuki-Zo Women's Forum Denounces Attack

The Kuki-Zo Women's Forum (KZWF) also issued a statement condemning the alleged assault. According to KZWF, the attack took place at 7:30 AM on March 12 and involved drone strikes and mortar bombardments against the Village Volunteers Eastern Zone (VVEZ), who reportedly did not retaliate.

"The use of military-grade drones and heavy artillery against a village defense group is an excessive and unlawful application of force,

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violating constitutional guarantees of justice, equality, and the right to life," KZWF stated.

KZWF accused the government of contradicting its own peace narrative, pointing out that despite official rhetoric, Kuki-Zo communities have continued to face targeted aggression. "Since May 3, 2023, Kuki-Zo and Meitei communities have coexisted within their respective territories, yet Meitei groups, emboldened by state support, have repeatedly encroached upon Kuki-Zo land and initiated hostilities."

The organization cited Articles 14 and 21 of the Indian Constitution, which guarantee equality and the right to life and personal liberty, accusing security forces of acting with bias. "The Assam Rifles' actions in Lajang reflect a pattern of state-sponsored oppression, where selective militarization is used not for national security but to subjugate the Kuki-Zo community."

Call for Government Action

KZWF reiterated that the Kuki-Zo people will not surrender their ancestral lands or tolerate further

encroachments by the Meitei community. The organization highlighted that tribal territories in Manipur predate British colonial rule and are protected under Article 244 and the Fifth Schedule of the Indian Constitution.

"The continued militarization of Kuki-Zo areas and the state's reluctance to act against Meitei armed militias have only worsened the crisis," KZWF stated. "If the Indian government truly believes in democracy and justice, it must correct its unconstitutional course in Manipur."

Both KOHUR and KZWF warned that if state-sponsored aggression continues, the Kuki-Zo people will remain steadfast in defending their rights, their land, and their constitutional protections. "Justice cannot be dictated by force, nor can peace be achieved through the oppression of an entire community," KZWF concluded.

(Power Corridors)

KUKI STUDENTS' ORGANISATION ELECTS NEW LEADERSHIP FOR 2025-28 TERM

Lamka, Mar 15: The Kuki Students' Organisation – General Headquarters (KSO-GHQ) successfully conducted its General Election for the 2025-28 term at the KIC Complex in Tuibong, Churachandpur.

The electoral process witnessed active participation from KSO Districts, Branches, and student organizations representing cognate tribes, highlighting a unified commitment to student leadership and community development.

In strict adherence to Article 104 of the KSO Constitution, the election was held under a well-defined Code of Conduct, ensuring a fair and transparent process. The

newly elected executive team includes:

President: Doukhomang Haokip

General Secretary: Jangkhosei, a.k.a. Seiboi Touthang

Finance Secretary: Boilhing Lhungdim

Information & Publicity Secretary: Seiminthang Haokip

The executive body will be further expanded to include additional key positions within 15 days, a process to be led by the newly elected President in consultation with the KSO Standing Committee.



ARAMBAI TENGGOL ABOVE THE LAW? LEADER ROAMS FREELY WITH ARMED MEN



Lamka, March 16: Despite a state-wide call for disarmament, Korounganba Khuman, the notorious leader of Arambai Tenggol, continues to roam freely, armed and flanked by heavily armed guards. The group, accused of orchestrating violence, looting weapons, and attacking security forces, remains a contentious presence in Manipur, even under President’s Rule.

A viral video has surfaced showing Korounganba attending a public function—a firearm visibly strapped to his hip—while armed guards escorted him like a VIP. The footage has intensified concerns over law and order in Manipur, with critics questioning the selective enforcement of security measures. “This video is a slap in the face of law and order in post-President’s Rule Manipur,” said an observer. “How can an armed militia leader move freely while security forces crack down on others?”

Controversial Meeting with the Governor
Korounganba, frequently seen in military fatigues

and carrying multiple weapons, recently made headlines after meeting Manipur Governor Ajay Kumar Bhalla. The meeting has drawn sharp criticism from Kuki-Zo groups, who accuse the administration of legitimizing a criminal group instead of taking action against them.

“How can a man facing an NIA investigation and accused of heinous crimes walk into Raj Bhavan and meet the Governor as if he were a high-profile political leader?” asked a Kuki-Zo activist.

Adding to the controversy, Arambai Tenggol recently surrendered 300 weapons to the police. However, many were reportedly outdated or non-functional, leading to accusations that the surrender was a symbolic stunt rather than a genuine effort to de-escalate violence.

EXPOSING NAGA, MEITEI DISCRIMINATORY NARRATIVE: NATIONAL ARCHIVES OF INDIA CLEARS THE AIR ON MANIPUR STATE DARBAR STANDING ORDER

In a significant development, a historical document that has been cited to disparage the Kuki community in Manipur has been debunked by the National Archives of India (NAI), shedding light on a controversial and discriminatory narrative perpetuated by the Nagas and Meitei groups. This revelation comes after a query by a research scholar from the SOAS, University of London, seeking verification of a document allegedly related to the administrative policies of the Manipur State Darbar during British rule.

The document in question, titled The Standing Order of the President Manipur State Darbar, allegedly issued by Captain Harvey between 1931 and 1941, contains several claims regarding the Kuki community, including their prohibition from acquiring firearms, the requirement for permission from Naga chiefs for settlement and taxation, and their classification as “aliens and refugees.” These claims had been used by some to label the Kukis as outsiders, further exacerbating inter-community tensions in Manipur.

The research scholar, working on a Ph.D. thesis examining colonial governance structures in Northeast India, wrote to the NAI seeking verification of the document’s authenticity, stating that the claims made in it seemed inconsistent with other colonial-era records. Specifically, she expressed concern over the document’s failure to align with known records such as the Manipur State Gazette and official British correspondences from the era.

In its response, the NAI thoroughly reviewed its archives and reported that no official record supported the existence of the document. The archives found no references to the purported orders issued by Captain Harvey or T.A. Sharp, nor did they locate any records from the British colonial administration or the Manipur



State Darbar that corroborated the claims made in the document. According to the NAI, the official colonial-era documentation, including correspondence from the Political Agent of Manipur, did not include such discriminatory policies against the Kuki people.

Key points highlighted by the NAI in its response include:

1. Existence of the Document: Our extensive records of the Manipur State Darbar proceedings, British colonial correspondences, and directives from the Governor-General’s office do not contain any reference to an order issued by Captain Harvey or T.A. Sharp that aligns with the document in question. Official documentation from the Political Agent of Manipur (then under the Assam Province) does not support the claims presented in the purported document. The absence of such an order in the Manipur State Gazette, official Darbar proceedings, and Political Reports submitted to

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the Government of India strongly suggests that the document in question is not an official colonial-era record.

2. Firearm Policies for Tribal Communities: The regulation of firearms in Manipur and its adjoining tribal areas during British rule was governed by the Indian Arms Act of 1878. While the British authorities imposed restrictions on firearm ownership in certain cases, these were applied universally across communities and not on an ethnic basis. The claim that Kukis were specifically barred from possessing firearms due to their alleged “savagery” is not supported by any recorded legislation or administrative orders. Our records indicate that firearms were issued on a case-by-case basis for hunting and self-defense, subject to licensing by the Political Agent or Manipur State Darbar.

3. Taxation and Settlement Rights: Official records, including land revenue accounts and tax schedules from the Manipur State Darbar, do not indicate any formal requirement for Kukis to seek permission from Naga chiefs for settlement or taxation purposes. Taxation during British rule was primarily administered by the State Revenue Department of Manipur, under the authority of the Political Agent. The notion that Naga chiefs had taxation authority over Kukis contradicts official colonial governance structures. Additionally, settlement patterns of Kuki villages were largely influenced by military recruitment, labor mobilization, and administrative convenience rather than inter-tribal permissions.

4. Ethnic Classification and Status of Kukis: British ethnographic records, including those compiled by J.H. Hutton (Census of India, 1931) and R. Brown (Statistical Account of Manipur, 1873), classify the Kukis as an indigenous hill tribe of Manipur. There is no reference in British official documents that describes the Kukis in Manipur as “aliens and refugees.” Rather, British administrative policies in the region recognized Kukis as a politically significant community, particularly due to their role in the Kuki Rebellion of 1917-1919, which

led to several policy shifts in governance. The claim that British authorities declared Kukis as non-indigenous contradicts known historical and administrative records.

5. Analysis of Language and Format: Our archival experts have noted that the structure, terminology, and phrasing used in the purported document do not conform to the standardized bureaucratic language of British official orders from the period. British administrative directives followed a highly structured format, typically referencing specific legal statutes, policy directives, or directives from the Government of India (Home Department, Foreign and Political Branch). The inconsistencies in terminology, informal language structure, and lack of citation of relevant legal frameworks cast doubt on the authenticity of the document. In light of these findings, the NAI strongly cautioned against using the document as a legitimate historical source, advising scholars to refer to more established archives, including those at the British Library and the Assam State Archives, for accurate records of colonial-era governance in Manipur.

This disclosure comes at a time of heightened ethnic tensions in Manipur, where the Kuki community has faced accusations and stereotyping by other groups, including the Nagas and Meiteis. The unmasking of this fraudulent document serves as a reminder of the dangers of historical distortion and its potential to fuel divisiveness and discrimination.

“May better sense prevail,” KOHUR stated. “But if it does not, let history remember that the Kuki-Zo people stood their ground, unwavering and unbroken, in the face of oppression.”

**FEATURED ARTICLE**

Biren's Shadow, Biren's Stories

A month after he quit as CM, Manipur remains caught in the dangerous narrative he spun. GOI can't make progress unless it squarely addresses the trust deficit

Hoineilhing Sitlhou

On March 8, all routes in Manipur were to be opened for 'free movement', three weeks after central rule was imposed following CM Biren Singh's long-awaited resignation. The plan was to send two state transport buses to Kangpokpi and Churachandpur districts.

But a clash in Gamgiphai (Kangpokpi) saw security forces use force on protesters. A community organisation said of the 70 injured, 48 were women. Question is, why was there a protest? And why did police manhandle the protesters? It was but a demonstration of the unmeasurably deep rift between Manipur's two major communities, and between a community and the state police both a result of Biren Singh being allowed to remain in office for 21 months after violence erupted in Manipur in May 2023.

The March 8 protest against free movement was to make a political statement and express dissent against what the hill communities consider a 'peace' forced upon the people, without any political settlement or acknowledgment of their sufferings or loss.

Protesters were also apprehensive of and insulted by the decision of Federation of Civil Societies (FOCS), an umbrella body of nearly 20 valley-based civil society

outfits, to 'march to the hills' the very same day. For, FOCS president who was spearheading the so-called Peace Rally is known for his remark that Manipur belongs to only Meitei and Naga communities.

Thus, neither the protest, nor the distrust would have come as a surprise to anyone remotely aware of what Biren Singh left in his wake.

People from both hills and the valley are tired of the conflict and hoped a change of guard would at least break the status quo of sporadic violence, and a people newly divided with every clash. Under Biren, it was almost two years of 'acts of retaliation' of one community against the other. Lynchings, sexual assaults, ransack and arson of homes, burning down of places of worship, public buildings, and villages, and displacements have resulted in demographic separation and polarisation of Manipur's two major ethnic communities Meiteis and Kuki-Zo. The violence left over 250 dead and about 58,000 people forcibly displaced.

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Per Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre, displacements in Manipur made up around 97% of all internal displacements in South Asia in 2023. Over 75% of these were within Manipur, and around 20% to Mizoram.

On Dec 14, 2023, eight months into the conflict, the remains of 60 people were airlifted from two mortuaries in Imphal under the aegis of IGAR South and 22 Assam Rifles and flown to Kangpokpiand Churachandpur districts. Many of these people had been killed in the conflict's initial days, in and around Imphal valley. Timely state intervention at that very moment would have saved lives and halted the escalation of violence.

But Biren Singh was allowed to continue a certain politics that garnered and strengthened support of the dominant ethnic populace. He successfully instilled 'fear psyche' in Meitei masses with narratives created of 'imagined outsider intrusion', and depleted resources in Manipur, simultaneously pinning all Manipur's problems-drugs, infiltration, land integrity-on hill communities.

It's why his resignation had been especially well-received by Kuki-Zo-an indication that Centre is being accommodative of their concerns and condition. In his resignation letter, Biren listed five issues for Centre's attention. One, maintain territorial integrity of Manipur: Two, crack down on border infiltration and formulate policy to deport 'illegal immigrants'. Three, continue the fight against drugs and narco terrorism. Four, retain the stringent and foolproof revised mechanism of free movement regime with biometrics, and finally, expedite time-bound border fencing with Myanmar.

Reality is, each of the above leads to more profiling of people and surveillance of particularly the hills. It

silences the rights of people. The letter had not the slightest hint at remorse for the violence. It labelled an entire community a national security threat and branded people variously as 'illegal immigrants', 'narco-terrorists' and 'poppy growers. This was necessary for Biren govt to justify its position on the violence-that it was a result of actions taken to check illegal influx from the open border with Myanmar and poppy cultivation by the hill tribes.

Kanato G Chophy in 2023 wrote "scapegoating or highlighting the involvement of only a single community in the poppy cultivation and drug trade in Manipur is unfair since all communities (Naga, Kuki, Meiteis etc) have profited from the illicit trade in drugs for decades." Manipur as a state became a political reality only after 1972. Kuki-Zos have inhabited hill stretches since before political borders were delineated. The idea of the 'outsider' became indispensable to identify the 'citizen', different from the 'other'-the Kuki-Zo.

Removing Biren was a prerequisite for dialogue, but it does not make it any easier to erase 'manufactured narratives' that many in Manipur have bought into.

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FEATURED ARTICLE

For a Just Peace in Manipur

To restore peace in Manipur, there is a need to ensure accountability and justice.

Thongkholal Haokip

After being largely left politically unattended by New Delhi for 21 months since the conflict broke out on 3 May 2023, Manipur received its due attention only after N Biren Singh resigned from the post of chief minister on 9 February 2025. This late attention to the strife-torn state came not because it was considered long overdue but because of the failure to address the internal political struggle among the members of the ruling party in the state, and a no-confidence motion against the government was moved by the state's opposition party, the Congress. The second tenure of Singh's government has been rife with dissidence. This struggle for leadership among the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) members of the legislative assembly (MLAs) added fuel to prevailing tensions. When no consensus candidate for the post of the new chief minister was reached among the 32 BJP MLAs, President's rule was imposed in the state on 13 February 2025. This is the 11th time that the President's rule has been imposed in this state and is the highest number in India since independence.

Now that the President's rule is in place, the attempt to restore law and order is largely authoritative. After chairing a crucial review meeting on the security situation in Manipur on 1 March 2025, the union home

minister instructed "free movement to be ensured for people on all roads in Manipur from March 8, 2025" and to "take strict action against anyone attempting to create obstructions" in order to restore "lasting peace in Manipur." The unduly late constitutional intervention is contrary to the much-acclaimed slogan of "minimum government, maximum governance." In Manipur, retaining the government was the maximum priority despite the total failure of constitutional machinery, while on the other hand, daily governance challenges were swept under the rug. It left over 60,000 people displaced and their homes destroyed, more than 300 people killed, and the two conflicting communities totally separated. This was the first partition-like situation in independent India in which two million people who had lived together for centuries were divided by buffer zones and were left to defend themselves.

When the riots broke out and were not effectively controlled for a week, it turned into an ethno-political conflict with a new demand for separate administration within the Constitution of India.

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Only through this new political arrangement do the Kukis think that their systematic subjugation, marginalisation, and dehumanisation will end. To them, the full operation of political impunity and the complete lack of accountability in the state were exacerbated by the delayed application of constitutional measures despite the apparent failure of the law-and-order situation. Instead of trying to address the grievances through dialogue, the union home ministry's approach appeared to be partisan. Treating a political situation as merely a law-and-order problem is not without resentment as the structures of domination are intended to be perpetuated. This attempt at political face-saving by the union government through a quick, overpowering, and authoritative approach, apart from the indignities that the aggrieved community has suffered and endured under the state government, has met with strong opposition. A raw and undiplomatic rejection of the demand for political autonomy leads to an unexpected and open defiance of the centre's directives. This act of open defiance by the public through the blockade of roads and their assertiveness is symbolic as it represents a powerful straw in the wind. Civil disobedience to the directives of political executives from the centre came due to the perceived injustice and "as a final expression" of their case. To the protesters, open defiance is the only way of getting their voices heard.

Exclusionary assertions denying the rights of the Kukis and positing them as the "other" continue to be prevalent with impunity and no accountability having been fixed so far. Such assertions coming from the persons holding responsible positions in civil society organisations or political parties do not sit well with the need for a just peace and, in fact, contribute to aggravating the conflict. The haste for peace intends to cast a long shadow on the demand for justice. Unlike what is being perceived, the highways have

been free for the movement of essential goods even during the peak of the conflict, except for the movement of the two warring communities. The enforced peace resulted in the death of one man and injuries to over 40 others. In response, women enforced shutdowns in the following days. Trying to suppress the political longing with an enforced peace will only alienate further and the existing sentiment prevalent against the state government can only be worsened.

To "restore lasting peace" in the state, there is a need for accountability and justice. There should be accountability from the top to the bottom of the political and administrative machinery of the government. It also requires the recovery of all the looted arms, and all those responsible for such easy lootings, including police personnel, should be tried under the law. Otherwise, safety and security are a far cry in the midst of thousands of uncontrolled sophisticated weapons. The instituted inquiry commission should not only submit its report on time but also ensure impartiality. Ensuring justice now is not merely about restorative, distributive or social justice, it is also about the long five-decade-old demand for political autonomy—currently expressed as a demand for the status of union territory with a legislature—in the hill areas of the state. Peace requires dialogue in democratic societies in the first place, and it cannot be enforced at the cost of justice.

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SOCIAL MEDIA
THE BUZZ

Moe Sat Khin
@MoeSatKhinn

This blatant challenge to #Myanmar's territorial integrity is an insult to the nation and its people. Myanmar strongly condemns and rejects this provocative act.

#MyanmarFactCheck
#Myanmar #Sovereignty #India
@ASEAN @timesofindia @PMOIndia @IndiaToday @BJP4Manipur @INCIndia



10:11 AM · Mar 13, 2025 · 5,573 Views

Siddhartha Roy
@siddhartharoy

News coming in from volunteers and Kuki village defense volunteers that the @official_dgar has started heavy military action against them.

"On March 12, 2025, at 7:30 AM in Lajiang village, Chandel district. The Assam Rifles, under the command of the 26 Sector, launched a heavy attack on the Village Volunteers Eastern Zone (VVEZ). However, as of the time this report was received, VVEZ had not retaliated. The public was shocked to learn that Assam Rifles deployed drone strikes and mortar bombardment against the Village Volunteers. Treating them as a terrorist organization underscores the Indian government's mistreatment of the tribal population."

#Manipur



1:52 PM · Mar 12, 2025 · 150 Views



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THE WISHES OF
THE KUKI-ZO
PEOPLE





MY DEAREST KUKILAND

As I sit down to write to you,
My heart overflows with emotions.
You are more than just a piece of land;
You are my home, my haven, and my identity.

I cherish every moment I spend with you,
From the warmth of your sun-kissed hills
To the coolness of your gentle breezes.
Your lush green forests, sparkling streams,
And rolling hills are a sight to behold.

But it's not just your natural beauty that I adore;
It's the people, the culture, and the traditions
That make you so special.
From the vibrant festivals to the warm hospitality,
Every experience with you is a treasure to cherish.

As I look back on the memories we've shared,
I am filled with gratitude. You have been my rock,
my comfort, and my inspiration. You have taught me
the value of resilience, community, and simplicity.

My dear Kukiland, I promise to always
Love, protect, and cherish you.
I will be your voice, your advocate, and your steward.
I will work tirelessly to preserve your beauty,
Promote your culture, and empower your people.

Forever and always, my love for you will endure.
You are a part of me, and I am a part of you.
Together, let us build a brighter future,
Filled with hope, joy, and prosperity.

With all my heart,
Obed Paougoulien Singson, Kukiland