

Thingkho *Le* Malcha

A Weekly Newsletter by KSO Media & Documentation Cell



FROM HOME TO CAMP: DISPLACED BUT NOT DEFEATED

CAULDRON OF UNCERTAINTY

The ethnic violence in Manipur has not just taken away precious lives but has thrown the state's children into a cauldron of uncertainty from where there is hardly any escape route at the moment.



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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.

MHA REVIEWS AFSPA IN THE NORTHEAST, ARMY WANTS MORE AREAS IN MANIPUR UNDER ACT

New Delhi, March 20: At a review meeting chaired by the Union Ministry of Home Affairs on Wednesday (March 20, 2025), the Army sought the inclusion of additional police station limits in Manipur Valley under the ambit of the Armed Forces (Special) Powers Act (AFSPA), a senior government official told The Hindu.

On November 14, 2024, out of 19 police stations in seven districts of Manipur, the AFSPA was reimposed in the jurisdiction of six police stations in five districts of Manipur, mostly in the valley, in the wake of ethnic violence in the State that erupted on May 3, 2023.

“The Army proposed that 12 police station limits in valley districts be brought under the AFSPA for operational efficiency. The suggestion was to reimpose the AFSPA in phases, however final decision will be taken by the Ministry,” said the official.

At a review meeting chaired by Union Home Minister Amit Shah in New Delhi on March 1, the possibility of bringing additional areas under the AFSPA, if required, was deliberated.

The AFSPA was withdrawn from the limits of all valley police stations between April 1, 2022 and April 1, 2023 by the Manipur government amid an improved security situation and “large sense of security among general public.” The provisions of the Act were withdrawn from Imphal Municipality area in 2004. The “disturbed area” notification for the hill districts in Manipur has been periodically extended, with the last notification issued on September 26, 2024.

The Ministry reviewed the scope of the AFSPA in Assam, Nagaland, Arunachal Pradesh and Manipur at a multi-agency meeting on Wednesday (March 19, 2025).

The periodic six-month disturbed area notification for the four States comes to an end on March 31. The



Ministry and the State governments extend or withdraw the notification after reviewing the security situation.

“It is likely that one of the four districts in Assam may be de-notified under the AFSPA,” said the official.

The AFSPA enables both the Central and State governments to issue notifications. Currently, the Ministry issues Disturbed Area notifications only for Nagaland and Arunachal Pradesh while the notifications for Manipur and Assam are issued by the respective State governments.

The 1958 law gives powers to the Army and the Central Armed Police Forces (CAPF) deployed in “disturbed areas” to kill anyone acting in contravention of law, arrest and search any premises without a warrant, and grants protection from prosecution and legal suits without the Central government’s sanction. The AFSPA came into force in Manipur in 1981. Manipur, a former Union Territory, attained Statehood in 1972. (The Hindu)

SC CONFIRMS MANIPUR VIOLENCE CASES TO BE TRIED IN GUWAHATI, EXTENDS TENURE OF JUSTICE GITA MITTAL COMMITTEE

New Delhi, March 17: New Delhi: The Supreme Court on Monday reaffirmed that the trials of Manipur ethnic violence cases, currently under CBI investigation, will be conducted in Guwahati, Assam, as previously transferred.

A three-judge bench, headed by Chief Justice Sanjiv Khanna, also extended the tenure of a committee led by Justice Gita Mittal, former Chief Justice of the Jammu and Kashmir High Court, until July 31, 2025.

The panel, which includes former Bombay High Court judge Shalini P. Joshi and former Delhi High Court judge Asha Menon, was constituted on August 7, 2023, to oversee relief and rehabilitation efforts for victims of the violence.

The extension followed submissions regarding the cases transferred to Guwahati for pre-trial proceedings.

The bench reiterated that the trials would proceed in Assam to ensure a fair and impartial judicial process amid concerns about the prevailing situation in Manipur.

The court had earlier moved 27 cases to Guwahati, citing the need for fairness in criminal justice administration.

These included 20 cases of molestation, rape, and murder, along with three cases related to the looting of weapons.

Among the transferred cases was the viral incident involving two women paraded naked, which drew national outrage.

The Supreme Court emphasised caution in handling reports submitted by the relief panel, acknowledging the sensitive nature of the issues.



Solicitor General Tushar Mehta, representing the Manipur government, highlighted the risk of some parties potentially misusing the information.

The bench scheduled the next hearing for the week of July 21, 2025, and directed the Manipur government to submit detailed reports on property damage, encroachment, and restoration efforts.

It had previously ordered data on fully or partially burned, looted, or trespassed properties, along with steps to address the grievances of displaced persons.

The court underscored the need for legal action against trespassers and suggested compensatory measures like mesne profits for unlawful occupation of properties.

It also urged the state government to expedite fund allocation for temporary and permanent housing solutions for the displaced.

Additionally, the apex court appointed former Maharashtra police chief Dattatray Padsalgikar in August 2023 to oversee the investigation into the criminal cases. (Northeast News)

BJP LEGISLATOR RAMESHWOR EXPOSES FORMER CM BIREN'S DUBIOUS FOREST POLICIES

Imphal, March 23: Despite public denials from BJP MLAs regarding any internal rifts, clear signs of a growing fracture within the party have surfaced in Manipur. Several legislators have subtly but forcefully criticized former Chief Minister N. Biren Singh, hinting at a deepening discontent among party ranks.

At the inauguration of the 1st Khuraijam Ranjana Devi Memorial Invitation Men's Volleyball Tournament 2025 in Yumnam Huidrom, MLA Lourembam Rameshwor Meetei launched a thinly veiled attack on Singh, without naming him directly. Rameshwor boldly stated that the intimidation of ordinary citizens had significantly diminished since February 9—the day Biren Singh stepped down as Chief Minister. This remark underlined the growing frustrations with Singh's leadership and the authoritarian style that some perceived him to have.

Rameshwor went further, accusing the former Chief Minister of orchestrating the illegal distribution of a large number of Aadhaar cards to manipulate elections in Chandel and Tengnoupal districts. He raised pointed questions about the previous administration's approach to illegal immigration, asserting, "He spoke about illegal immigrants, but how could so many unexpected Aadhaar cards be issued, and how were people enrolled in the voter list?" Rameshwor was alluding to the controversial elections in which Letpao Haokip and Ollis—both close allies of Singh—secured victories in Tengnoupal and Chandel, respectively.



In another sharp critique, Rameshwor blasted Singh's environmental policies. While the former CM touted his commitment to forest protection, Rameshwor accused his associates of being directly involved in the illegal trade of forest products, undermining the very agenda he claimed to champion.

Amid these public grievances and the evident split within the party, Rameshwor struck an optimistic note, assuring that efforts were underway to establish a new government. He declared, "By the grace of God, we will soon have a leader who can serve all people equally," signaling his hope for a change in leadership that could unite the fractured BJP ranks. These remarks come at a time when the state assembly is in suspended animation following Biren Singh's resignation.



The terms of peace may be negotiated by political leaders, but the fate of peace is up to each of us.

— Barack Obama

REVELATION OF REAL NARCO-TERRORISTS: SECURITY FORCES SEIZE HEROIN FROM ARAMBAI TENGGOL



Imphal, March 23: The fierce gunfight between the Meitei extremists groups led to the revelation of real narco-terrorists in the Meiteis' valley of Imphal. Security forces on Saturday seized approximately 15 grams of a substance suspected to be heroin, along with other materials, while conducting a raid at the office of Arambai Tenggol Unit-17 Khurai under Porompat Police Station, Imphal East.

According to Manipur Police, the raid took place the same day that a group of unknown persons, suspected to be from Arambai Tenggol (AT), numbering about 15-20, entered the residence of an alleged functionary of the United National Liberation Front (Proscribed), namely, Irengbam Nandakumar Singh @ Tonsana (56), of Kongpal Chingangbam Leikai, near Kongpal Thong. A fight ensued between the two groups, resulting in blunt injuries to four UNLF(P) cadres due to sticks and other objects.

Manipur Police also reported that there were gunfire exchanges between both sides. Security forces teams immediately rushed to the spot, where they detained the four UNLF(P) cadres and transported them to the hospital for treatment.

According to the Manipur Police, the detained UNLF(P) cadres are stable and free from any life-threatening injuries, having sustained only blunt trauma (not gunshot wounds, etc.).

On the same day, in a follow-up action based on intelligence, security forces conducted a raid at the office of Arambai Tenggol Unit-17 Khurai under Porompat Police Station, Imphal East District.

During the raid, security forces seized 15 grams of a substance suspected to be heroin, four hunting boots, three four-wheelers, one BP helmet, two BP jackets, one camouflage bag, five rifle slings, four tactical belts, eight BP plates, two light BP plates (fiber), two holsters, one mobile phone, one magazine pouch, three wireless handsets, four wireless chargers, one tear gas smoke shell, one INSAS bayonet, two 303 bayonets, two swords, two Stallion boxes, two pairs of knee caps, one magazine pouch, four banners/boards of AT-Unit 17, eight camouflage T-shirts, four camouflage pants, three military jackets, 103 used cartridges, one live round, incriminating documents, including papers, diaries, and letterheads.

RSS CHIEF BHAGWAT INAUGURATES SANGH'S TOP MEET; MANIPUR SITUATION, NORTH-SOUTH 'DIVIDE' ON AGENDA



Bengaluru, March 21: RSS chief Mohan Bhagwat on Friday inaugurated the three-day meet of Akhil Bharatiya Pratinidhi Sabha (ABPS), Sangh's top decision-making body, that will discuss Manipur situation, as well as the attempts to create the 'North-South divide' in the country.

Addressing a press meet, RSS joint secretary CR Mukunda said, "Intense decisions on some of the contemporary and burning issues," will be addressed during the meeting, that will be attended by heads of 32 affiliated organisations of RSS.

"Manipur is going through a rough patch for the past 20 months, but there is some hope today. As we go through the vision of the central government, which are political and some of which are administrative, it has risen hopes for people of Manipur," Mukunda said.

He said the RSS has been analysing the situation and it believed that "it will take a long time for a natural

atmosphere to be created."

The RSS joint secretary said that forces challenging national unity were a matter of worry. "As an organisation, we are concerned about the forces which are challenging national unity, especially raising the North-South divide, whether it is about delimitation or languages," Mukunda said.

He said RSS volunteers and functionalities of different organisations related to the 'Sangh Parivar' are trying their best to bring in harmony, especially in certain states.

According to Mukunda, RSS has grown manifold in the last one year.

"Presently, there are 83,129 active Shakhas, which is over 10,000 more than what we had last year," he explained. (TNIE)

DIFFICULT PHASE TO BE OVER SOON, ASSURES SC JUDGE DURING VISIT TO CURACHANDPUR

Lamka, March 23: Supreme Court judge, Justice B R Gavai, on Saturday expressed hope that the “current difficult phase” in ethnic strife-torn Manipur will be over soon with the assistance of the executive, legislature and judiciary and the state will prosper like the rest of the country.

Justice Gavai, who led a delegation of apex court judges that visited Manipur, called upon the people of the northeastern state to work together to restore peace and harmony.

Justice Gavai, along with Supreme Court judges Vikram Nath, M M Sundresh and K V Vishwanathan, visited a relief camp in Churachandpur district and met internally displaced persons (IDPs), officials said.

The delegation also virtually inaugurated a legal services camp, a medical camp and a legal aid clinic from the Mini Secretariat at Lamka in the district, they said.

Chief Justice of Manipur High Court, Justice D Krishnakumar, and Justice Golmei Gaiphulshilu were also present.

Addressing the gathering, Justice Gavai said, “Our country is a true example of unity in diversity. India is home for all of us. We know that you all are going through a difficult phase but with the assistance of everyone, the executive, the legislature and the judiciary, this phase will be over in a short period.”

“Our Constitution is a great document. When we compare our country to our neighbouring countries, we realise our Constitution has kept us strong and united. Have belief in the Constitution... one day, peace



will return to Manipur and the state will prosper like the rest of the country,” he added.

For a just society, the principles of accessibility to justice, healthcare and opportunities that empower individuals are very important. Legal aid services will play a crucial role in ensuring displaced individuals get their rightful entitlement, be it on matters of identity of documentation, property rights or compensation claims, he said, adding that 265 legal aid clinics are functional in the state.

He said that 109 medical camps have been set up across the state to provide basic healthcare services.

Justice Gavai also stressed the need for readmission of students who had to drop out of school due to the conflict.

At the function, several health officials were facilitated by the judges, while ‘Sanad’ was distributed among 41 newly enrolled advocates and stationery among IDP students.

MANIPUR CHILDREN IN RELIEF CAMPS CAUGHT IN CAULDRON OF UNCERTAINTY

Lamka, March 22: The ethnic violence in Manipur has not just taken away precious lives but has thrown the state's children into a cauldron of uncertainty from where there is hardly any escape route at the moment. Forced to live in relief camps after being displaced, education is the last thing on the priority list for their parents as they have to think of their basic necessities first.

The scene at Sadbhavana Mandap near Tuibong Multipurpose Hall, a relief camp in Churachandpur housing 208 children, is no different. Struggling to access basic education amid the ongoing crisis, the children have nothing else to do other than playing games on mobiles or outside on the compound. Their parents are shedding tears watching their future getting wasted.

The relief camp is housing 400 inmates in total for over two years. Of them, there are 81 children in the 0-6 years age group and 127 in the 6-18 years age bracket. A total of 37 out of 81 are males and 44 females, while 62 among 127 are males and 65 females.

Hatneu Haokip (21), who was studying in Class XI in the science stream at a college in Imphal before the violence broke out in the state, said she planned to study pharmaceuticals after Class XII. But her dreams were ruined by the unwanted events that took place in the state over the last two years. "It is the same story for many living in relief camps," she added.

A source, who looks after the Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) as far as their food, medical assistance and other needs are concerned, said, "There are altogether 90 students in the relief camp at the Sadbhavana

Mandap of which three are college students." He added that initially, private educational institutions also extended support to the education of students. However, it has decreased now as they have liabilities to pay salaries to their staff.

There are altogether 84 relief camps in Churachandpur district.

Another source said overcrowding of govt schools in the town area has become an issue. One organisation is providing free education to about 400 students now.

Lucky Deb (39), another person displaced by the violence and now staying in the relief camp, said, "I have four children. Though they, as well as other students living in the relief camp, go to school, the education is not sufficient." He said his first two children were in high school and they lost their crucial period of getting education only due to the violence.

Deb, a driver, urged the govt as well as the authorities concerned to take initiatives so that the future of the young generation can be protected and rebuilt.

The story of Tabitha (24), a resident of Imphal West staying in the relief camp in Churachandpur now, is hardly any different. She has a nine-year-old son who has been deprived of education since the violence broke out. She used to run a small beauty parlour with which she used to meet all her expenses. All she can do is pray for her son's future now. (TOI)



OPINION

Armed Forces or Armed Oppressor?

Lhainunthem Khongsai

It was a bleak Saturday afternoon in Kanggui. The town, unusually silent, was stirred only with the occasional hum of a passing vehicle. Our Hostel, perched along NH2 was no stranger to noise—a relentless symphony of movement and commotion, day in and day out .

For a fleeting moment, we watched through our window as an army convoy sped past. An hour later, soldiers in full combat gear emerged—guns in hand, poised for battle. Fear gripped us. It was an unsettling sight—figures in uniform, their faces obscured by camouflage, their weapons primed, ready to fire at a moment's notice.

By late afternoon clips were circulated, where they strike a woman at Keithelmanbi, 7 KM away from kanggui—the woman raised her arms, desperately shielding herself from the sting of tear gas. But mercy was not theirs to give. They thrashed her as if she were an enemy, not a citizen. Later, the toll of the wounded rose sharply, with 48 women among the injured, not counting the many men and young boys who also suffered grave harm from rubber bullets to live rounds, and the brutal strikes of batons wielded by the so-called Armed forces . It is a shame that in a nation where we proudly uphold our birthright and constitution, women

are still marginalized and the voice of the people go unheard, while their rights are ignored.

The other clips show where they chase young boys, their terrified footsteps pounding against the earth. Some managed to escape, vanishing into chaos. Others, too exhausted to run any further, were left behind—helpless and defenseless. And there, under the fists and boots of those we call our protectors, they were beaten into bruises, their cries swallowed by the very laws that once promised to shield them.

The same day turned darker when gunfire erupted, claiming the life of an innocent boy, Lalgouthang Singsit. Was he not a son of this soil, a child of this land? What danger did he pose, unarmed and unguarded, that his life had to be stolen by those sworn to protect? This is not protection—it is persecution. A war waged not against enemies, but against the very people they swore to defend. How do we place our trust in those who turn their guns on their own citizens? This is not defense; it is a war waged within, a betrayal etched in blood. Today, we remember them not as guardians of the

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laws, but as those who brought us pain, who stripped away our freedoms, and who made rights feel like a privilege to be begged for.

Our constitution declares that they are here to protect us. But from whom ?

In reality, their very presence instills fear—deepening the unease in children minds and casting shadow over the lives of our people. This is not just a display of power; it is a psychological siege, a silent captivity where fear itself becomes the unspoken law.

We speak of democracy—but what kind of democracy is this ? A democracy where justice is selective, where equality is promised but not practiced, and where the very principles meant to protect us are bent against

us? If this is democracy, then whose voice truly matters?

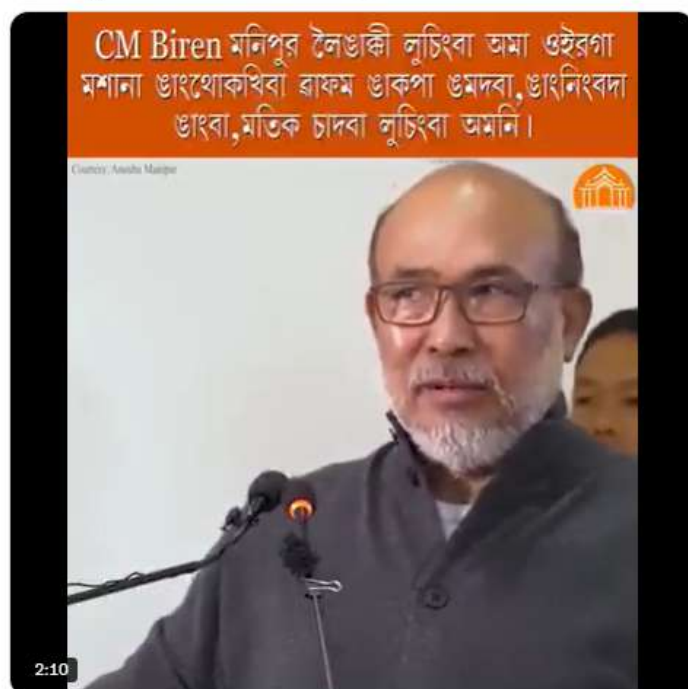
Our nation may have achieved Independence long ago, yet the journey towards true freedom never ends. Today my people remain shackled in another battle— one not fought with flags and treaties, but with the resilience of the people refusing to be erased. Indeed the Kuki people did not fight against the foreign rule, but for the right to exist with dignity, to preserve our heritage, and to reclaim the voice they have tried to silence. And no matter how heavy their boots press upon our land, the spirit of our people will never bow.

Lhainunthem Khongsai is the author of the book 'Her Words, Our Story'.

THE SOCIAL MEDIA BUZZ

H S Benjamin Mate
@BenjaminMate1

A closer examination of Manipur Ex-CM N Biren Singh's statements on Manipur violence reveals a disturbing pattern of deception. His repeated lies are a blatant attempt to conceal his alleged genocide campaign against the minority Christian Kuki-Zo community. Any credible analysis will affirm that he is a pathological liar desperate to cover up his heinous crimes against the Kuki-Zo community.



5:00 PM · Mar 23, 2025 · 409 Views



Dr. Lamtinthang Haokip
@DrLamtinthangHk

Your own MLAs can't come & sit in the State Assembly, or cross the district borders, and you call it Peace.! Mind it, more than half of your sponsored looted Arms & Ammunition are still in the hands of your militia groups.

@rashtrapatibhvn @INCIndia



thehindu.com

Manipur is peaceful, dialogue between Kuki and Meitei communities initiated: Amit Shah

8:05 am · 22 Mar 25 · 1,096 Views

**FEATURED ARTICLE**

Manipur's 'Free Movement' is a Dangerous Political Charade

Greeshma Kuthar

The Centre's continuing unwillingness to effectively mitigate the ethnic violence in Manipur is leading to a crisis. The State, now under President's Rule, plunged into more violence after an announcement by Home Minister Amit Shah on March 1. One person died and 103 injured, out of which 16 are critical. The reason: a focus on grandstanding instead of addressing people's needs, even as the State sinks further and further into a humanitarian crisis of its own making.

On March 10, two days after Manipur made it to the news, once again, this time with visuals of burning vehicles and clashes, residents of the hill district of Kangpokpi were busy clearing up remnants of the violence at Keithelmanbi Military Colony (KMC): Shards of glass, tear gas and chilli bomb shells, rocks of all sizes, from people's homes and on the streets.

Lalgouthang Singsit, 30, who grew up in KMC, was shot dead by security personnel as he was trying to run away from them on March 8, ironically on the day Shah ordered "free movement" across the violence-torn districts of Manipur. This order, made just as the Parliament was to convene, has now disrupted ongoing efforts to instil trust across the affected hill districts, creating a wedge between the district administration and the people.

Indeed, far from anything close to peace that the government has been talking about, International Women's Day in Manipur saw tribal Kuki-Zo women protesting on the streets against Shah's announcement, only to be lathi-charged and attacked with tear-gas shells. What transpired on March 8 still seemed to be a source of confusion both for locals who protested this announcement and the security forces that were trying to enforce the order.

At the centre of this violence is KMC, whose history dates back to WWII, when Kuki-Zo soldiers from Sadar hills had requested a settlement in the foothills from the British political agent, in lieu of their participation in the war. Set up in 1946, KMC is one of the biggest villages along the Asian Highway, formerly National Highway 02.

This highway, a site of extortion by militant groups across communities, is now seeing increased militarisation and developmental activity, owing to the violence and also its expansion. The stretch of the highway running along Kangpokpi district has been a major focus of Shah's statements

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throughout the period of violence. The Home Minister's only visit during the peak of violence ended with him directing Kuki militant groups to open up the highway, which they had blocked since ethnic violence began in Manipur on May 3, 2023. They complied with this direction, despite opposition from the general public. However, the highway has seen multiple blockades since, each of them ending after an intervention from the Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA).

Shah's announcement on March 1 received a mixed response in the State: a few valley-based groups announced they would march into the hills, while tribal organisations in the hills warned of consequences if that were to happen. A day before March 8, the government issued a notification announcing that a bus service would be flagged off from Imphal, which would take passengers to two Kuki-Zo districts: Kangpokpi and Churachandpur. Such services have been announced on at least two occasions earlier but saw no takers, and were called off. In fact, residents of Kangpokpi told Frontline that there has never been a bus service operated by the government from Imphal to their district.

Deceit of disinformation

On the morning of the March 8, a delegation of the Federation of Civil Societies (FOCS), a Meitei organisation, set off from the Imphal War Cemetery towards Kangpokpi, in what they termed a "peace rally". The group was stopped by the Manipur Police before they could reach the border of Imphal West and proceed to Kangpokpi. Central Armed Police Forces (CAPF) personnel offered them the option of traveling by bus service instead: It was to be escorted, and given security cover.

FOCS refused this offer citing security concerns and backed off from their "peace expedition". Ahead at Gamgiphai, the border of Imphal West and Kangpokpi,

Kuki-Zo women had mobilised to stop members of FOCS, if they were to make it to Kangpokpi. What seemed to be spreading rapidly among the women who had come together was disinformation. For instance, that attempts were being made to deceive the protestors and that Meities would be escorted through the district in bulletproof vehicles; or that Arambai Tenggol members would also be escorted through the district. The latter appears to have arisen from a live video that Robin Magang, an Arambai Tenggol leader, streamed from the border. As such misinformation spread through the crowd, more and more CAPF personnel pulled up at Gamgiphai, taking position between the women and the highway.

At around 11 am, a Border Security Force (BSF) convoy, escorting an empty Manipur State Transport bus, was seen approaching Gamgiphai. The women were livid. Within seconds, they started pelting stones and whatever they could find at the convoy. The CAPF personnel rushed forward to stop them while hurling a stream of tear gas shells. But the convoy managed to make it through the mob, and away from Gamgiphai.

But even after the convoy passed, the disinformation didn't stop. There were different versions now: Some said Arambai Tenggol members were inside the Casspirs, while others alleged there were two Meiteis inside the vehicles. The women demanded to know how security personnel could allow this. Senior officers, such as the CRPF DIG Manish Sachar shouted back, saying that women can't dictate what should or shouldn't be allowed through the property of the government.

The women refused to give up. As several rounds

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of tear gas rained on them, they kept returning to the highway. They brought out buckets of water and emptied them on tear gas shells when they landed in their midst; some kicked the shells right back at the security personnel. From time to time, they would start singing the national anthem.

Meanwhile, the convoy escorting the bus had made its way past multiple blockades to KMC, where groups had mobilised in a matter of hours to stop the vehicles. Titing Dimngel, 51, who was part of a group of women who tried to stop the convoy said they received frantic calls from Gamgiphai, directing them to stop the convoy. In two rows, the residents of the village decided to stop the convoy, the first comprising of women, and the second, men.

Blockades were set up across the highway including a private bus that was placed diagonally on the highway, blocking its path. When the convoy approached KMC and stopped because of the blockade, Titing and her team flagged it down, demanding that they return along with the bus. "We told an officer that we can't allow the convoy to proceed as we were opposed to this free movement," said Titing, recollecting how in a matter of minutes, the personnel resorted to lathi charge and more tear gas. Then the men entered the scene, pelting stones, glass bottles and petrol bombs. A minibus used by the CRPF was set on fire, as the convoy tried to force its way through. The men then emptied cement blocks on the road, making it impossible for the convoy to move ahead.

The roads were a picture of chaos: mobs pelting stones, security personnel opened fire and hurled tear gas, chilli bombs and shot pellets. The men would run away only to regroup. This continued for hours, with both sides seeming to give up around 4.30 pm. Half an hour later, two boys trying to cross the road were stopped by CRPF personnel and an altercation broke out. The CRPF chased the boys into the KMC streets,

where there were other men hiding; and they all began running away. Singsit was among them. Singsit's friend Letboimang told Frontline that Singsit was shot dead when tried to run towards his home.

The district closed up after this, along with the highway. Kuki-Zo groups said they would not open the highway or claim the body of Singsit till their demands were met. These included the transfer of the SP and an apology from the government. The MHA refused to concede to the demands. Left with no choice, Singsit's funeral was held on March 13. The following day the highway was opened again.

What seems beyond repair is the bitterness among the Kuki-Zo groups in Kangpokpi, who had welcomed President's Rule a month prior. "Is this exercise of taking an empty bus through this highway more important than rebuilding trust among communities? Why is it so important?" asked Kimneizou, general secretary of the Kuki Women's Organisation for Human Rights. She questioned the motive of Shah's announcement and demanded to know how an empty bus can take precedence over the needs of the Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) and the unaddressed cases of rape and murder.

"Is the Indian government trying to provoke us despite the tensions between communities?" asked Kimneizou, cautioning that such shallow attempts to project normalcy in the State will only lead to a backlash.

At home and in the line of fire

Paongam Dimngel, 67, a retired teacher from KMC, was crouched in a corner of his room when a chilli

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bomb landed inside it. From early in the afternoon, he had seen young boys from his locality run past his house towards the highway with stones in their hands, only to be chased by security personnel. But he didn't expect that his own house would come under the line of fire.

Covering himself with a blanket, he remained in the same position for an hour, fearing more shells. Living at least half a kilometre away from the highway, Dimngel was confounded that security personnel could lob tear gas shells and chill bombs into homes. Dimngel later told Frontline that the events of March 8 were disgraceful. "This could have been easily avoided if they [the government] had just spoken to us. Our people need to be heard."

About the events of March 8, the district administration and security personnel insist they had communicated to Kuki-Zo organisations, the previous day, that an empty bus would be driven through the district. The organisations appeared to have agreed, several officials told Frontline. This empty bus made its way through Churhandpur district and out, without any incident. But the groups of women assembled at Gamgiphai and the residents of KMC seemed to have no idea about this agreement between their leaders and security personnel.

Lhunmang Mangjel, the village chairman of KMC, was at a loss for words when asked if he was aware of such an agreement. Mangjel had received a call from Kuki-Zo leaders asking him to block the highway. No other communication was made to him. These leaders were less than a kilometre away from Keithelmanbi, and yet none of them had intervened to stop the clashes between the residents and the police at KMC.

Kimneizou, and several other women leaders, are now demanding accountability for what happened on March 8. Highlighting how women are being subject

to risk even when they have no say in leadership or decision making, Mary, another member of the group, wondered why both the government and their leaders were behaving like "headless chicken". "We will not allow more people to die over nothing"! she exclaims.

But what emerges every time such misguided, insensitive attempts are made by the Central government, is the absolute disregard of the opinions of the people in the hills, who have been echoing this differential treatment for years.

Manipur's Budget, meanwhile was filed by Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman in Parliament, as the State was now under President's Rule. The inadequacy of the Budget in addressing the needs of IDPs was echoed by many MPs. Manipur's Congress MP Alfred K. Arthur pointed out how the Budget was a legal and Constitutional anomaly: The Manipur Legislative Assembly Order, 1972, brought into effect by Article 371 (C) of the Constitution mandates that all developmental plans, need to be made separately for the hill areas and the rest of the State. Sitharaman's budget didn't do so, and this trend, said Arthur, has been the norm in Manipur since 1972.

"This order is in place so that disproportionate assets aren't created between the hills and the valley; 98 per cent of the hills are occupied by tribal communities in Manipur. This is how problems are created," Arthur added.

The 22 months of violence has left every part of Manipur scarred. But this disparity has been at the core of the violence in Manipur, often overlooked by narratives that seem to be fixated on insurgency, weapons, or drugs, all of which

Contd.

have been systemic problems the State for decades, well before before May 3, 2023.

No peace without justice

That the ousted Chief Minister was partisan doesn't need any further proof. But even after the imposition of the President's Rule, very little is being done to address the glaring lack of governance in the State that has left the hills further marginalised. Critically ill patients, for instance, continue to travel for days to access medical care.

Law enforcement agencies, who were seen as communal, are yet to absolve themselves. A viral video emerged from Kangpokpi of a group of young men playing football, where some players were holding weapons. This video was uploaded by one of the boys in the video; within weeks, the YouTubers seen in the video were arrested. On the other hand, the Governor met leaders of the Arambai Tenggol, many of them accused of committing heinous crimes against Kuki-Zo tribes, orchestrating violence against Meitei Christians,

extorting Meitei groups and occupying abandoned properties of the Kuki-Zo in Imphal. A group of them were arrested from their unit in Kakching for facilitating activities of banned militant groups, only to be released within hours.

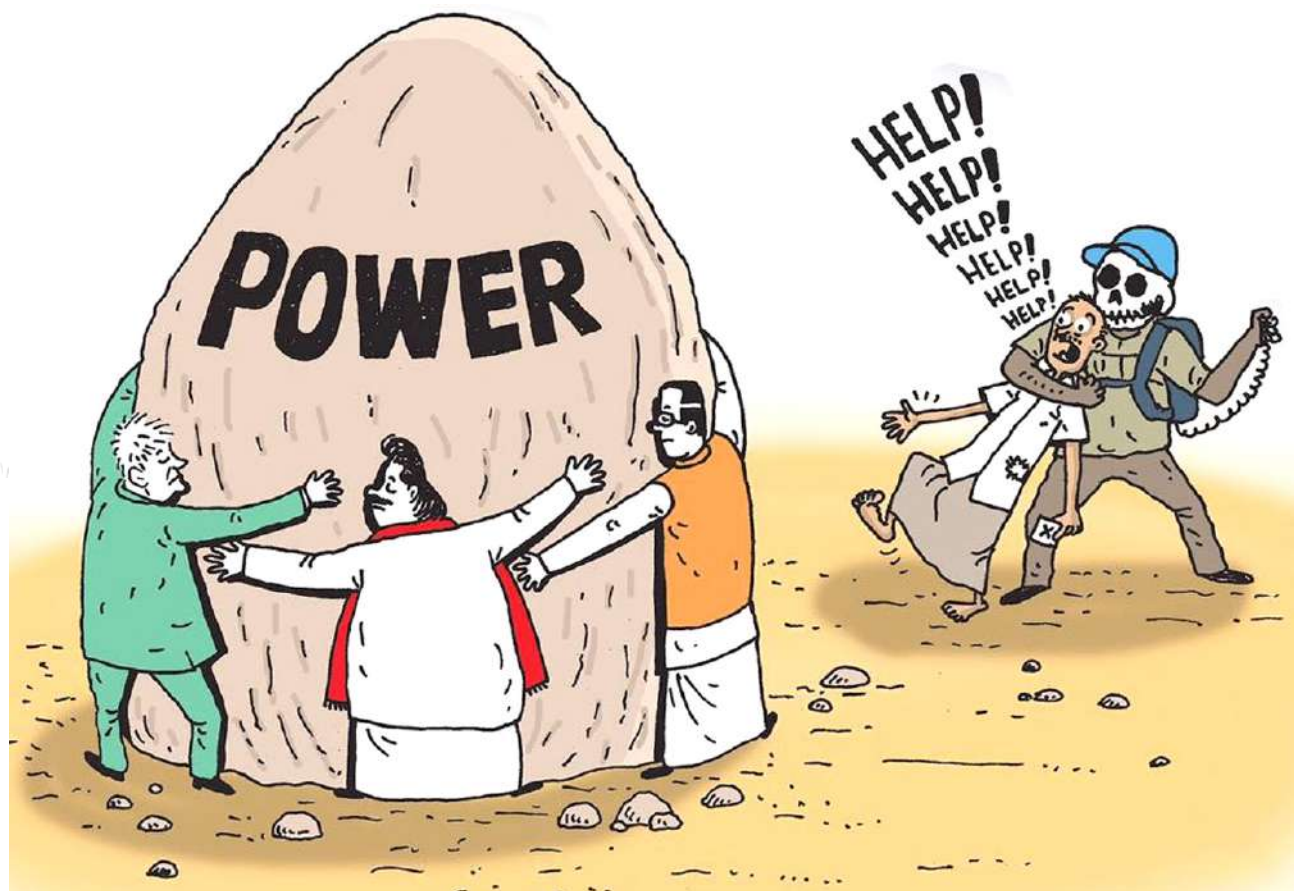
The events of March 8 only strengthen the belief that the government is partisan. And peace cannot be achieved without justice. The lack of will to address simmering dissidence with fairness rather than brute force will only impede Manipur's road to recovery.

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**ATTENTION
FOR POWER &
IGNORED KUKI-
ZO PEOPLE**





I MISS MY HOME

~ Momoi Khongsai

I whispered underneath my breath
a thought collided with my soul,
No place to call my own
My mind was struck by a lonely refrain,
no home to ease my pain
Laughters echoes fade with time, months
since i have shared a smile with parents dear.

A whispered truth, I dare not say
With age and pride, my conscious mind tells me
to be strong But in silence my heart sings
a different song
Yet, memories of love , of pain and loss and tears
Echoes of trauma, lingering in my head
A constant reminder of the life that has been shed
Do I dare return, to that haunted ground?
Where shadow of sorrows forever holds their space
Where love and laughter, were silenced and still?
Can i find solace, in the land that took it all?

