

Thingkho *Le* Malcha

A Weekly Newsletter by KSO Media & Documentation Cell



NO

HOME MINISTER

THE SITUATION IS NOT EVEN CLOSE TO NORMAL IN MANIPUR

President's Rule may have been a necessary step, but it has created a political vacuum, leaving the state adrift under a distant bureaucracy.



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KUKI VICTIMS' UPDATE

As on 09. 03. 2025



226
DEATHS

* Lalgouthang Singsit



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.

PARLIAMENTARY PANEL RECOMMENDS SPECIAL COMMITTEE FOR DISPLACED WOMEN AND CHILDREN IN MANIPUR

New Delhi, March 29: A parliamentary panel has recommended that the union ministry of women and child development should establish a dedicated special committee with a targeted and separate programme/policy/scheme for the internally displaced women and children in Manipur in the aftermath of the ethnic violence that broke out in the north eastern state on May 3, 2023.

The recommendation was made by the Department-related Parliamentary Standing Committee on Education, Women, Children, Youth and Sports headed by Congress MP Digvijaya Singh, which presented the 365th Report on Demands for Grants 2025-26 pertaining to the Ministry of Women and Child Development to the Rajya Sabha on March 28.

In its report, the committee noted that Manipur has been “under an extraordinary crisis for 21 months” in which over hundreds of lives have been lost and 60,000 people displaced internally and living in relief camps.

“A significant portion of those affected are women and children, who have been rendered homeless, deprived of basic necessities, and left in extreme distress. Their access to nutrition, education, and healthcare has been severely disrupted. These children, pregnant women, lactating mothers, and elderly women are facing immense hardship, leading to grave psychological and social consequences. The absence of economic opportunities has further deepened the despair,” the report said.

‘Take steps to safeguard women and children in relief camps from sexual violence’

The committee said that while it appreciates the efforts undertaken by the ministry, a special committee with a targeted programme is necessary for the internally displaced women and children.



“This initiative should ensure direct monitoring and transparent delivery of assistance to prevent misuse and guarantee the well-being of affected individuals. Special provisions must be made for the education of displaced children, healthcare for lactating mothers, and employment alternatives for affected women to rebuild their lives. Steps must be taken to safeguard women and children in relief camps from sexual violence,” the report said.

The committee also recommended that additional steps should be taken for nutritious food, breakfast, adequate accommodation facility to women and children in relief camps in Manipur.

“The Committee also recommends that Ministry should allocate additional funds for provision of the same as well as to facilitate women and children staying in relief camps in Manipur till the situation becomes norm,” the committee said in its report.

The report also noted that the National Commission for Women (NCW)’s northeast cell has focussed its activities on other states in the region in the past two years despite the conflict in Manipur.

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“The Committee notes that the Reports of the NCW from its consultations in Manipur consistently emphasized the need for a women-led peacebuilding and cooperation effort. The Committee notes that the NCW Northeast Cell’s activities has largely been focused on other states in the Northeast during the last two years, but that its resources can be leveraged to support peacebuilding and conflict resolution between local communities in Manipur,” it said.

Ethnic violence began in Manipur in May 2023, and has been going on ever since – killing hundreds, displacing tens of thousands and sharply dividing the state along ethnic lines. In several instances, cases of violence

against women have been reported during the conflict.

On July 19, 2023, just months after bloody ethnic strife erupted between the Meitei and Kuki communities in the state, a 30-second video clip recorded on May 4 emerged, featuring two Kuki-Zo women being paraded naked and being groped by a sizeable mob of men belonging to the Meitei community in Kangpokpi district.

In their testimony to the media, the survivors said that after they were led away by the mob, they were sexually assaulted and raped. (The Wire)

CENTRE EXTENDS “AFSPA” IN MANIPUR, ARUNACHAL & NAGALAND FOR SIX MONTHS

New Delhi, March 30: The Ministry of Home Affairs, Government of India in its statement on Sunday declared that the Central government has extended ‘The Armed Forces Special Powers Act (AFSPA)’ in the states of Manipur, Arunachal Pradesh, and Nagaland for 6 months.

According to the statement of the Ministry, it stated that the Central Government declared the extension of AFSPA in the exercise of the powers conferred by Section 3 of the Armed Forces (Special Powers) Act, 1958 (28 of 1958).

With the view of the Central Government, the Ministry has extended AFSPA in the entire State of Manipur as a ‘disturbed area’ for six months, excluding the areas falling under the jurisdiction of Imphal, Lamphel, City, Singjamei, Patsoi, Wangoi, Porompat, Heingang, Irilbung, Thoubal, Bishnupur, Nambol, Kakching Police Stations of 5 districts, the Ministry stated.

It further stated that the Ministry also extended

AFSPA and declared as a ‘disturbed area’ in Tirap, Changlang, and Longding districts in Arunachal Pradesh, and the areas falling within the jurisdiction of Namsai, Mahadevpur, and Chowkham police stations in the Namsai district of Arunachal Pradesh, bordering the State of Assam.

Moreover, the Ministry also extended AFSPA and declared as a disturbed area in Dimapur, Niuland, Chumoukedima, Mon, Kiphire, Noklak, Phek, and Peren districts in Nagaland falling within the jurisdiction of Khuzama, Kohima North, Kohima South, Zubza and Kezocha police stations in Kohima District; Mangkolemba, Mokokchung-I, Longtho, Tuli, Longchem, and Anaki ‘C’ police stations in Mokokchung District; Yanglok police station in Longleng District; Bhandari, Champang and Ralan police stations in Wokha District; and Ghatashi, Pughoboto, Satakha, Suruhuto, Zunheboto, and Aghunato police stations in Zunheboto District.

MANIPUR GOVERNMENT'S PARTIAL RESPONSE TO MISSING PERSONS CASES RAISES ALARM

Lamka, March 30: In a recent turn of events, the state government's treatment of missing persons cases in Manipur has come under intense scrutiny. While the case of Luwangthem Mukesh, a missing person from Imphal Valley, has been met with an aggressive response, offering substantial rewards and attention, a striking disparity is evident in the handling of similar cases involving tribal communities.

Luwangthem Mukesh's disappearance saw a swift government reaction, with authorities announcing a reward of Rs 10 lakh for any information leading to his recovery. However, the cases involving individuals from the tribal communities, such as the abduction of Muangpu Langel from Vengnuam, Jiribam, by the Arambal Tenggol on June 6, 2024, remain largely ignored. Despite repeated appeals from the affected families and communities, no meaningful actions have been taken, leaving over 11 tribal individuals still missing and without justice. These cases have received little to no attention from the state government, fueling claims of neglect and discrimination.

The contrast in the government's approach is deeply troubling. While the state has taken considerable

steps to resolve cases concerning individuals from the Imphal Valley, it has been noticeably slow in addressing the plights of those from the marginalized tribal groups. Such a stark difference in response raises serious concerns about systemic bias in the government's priorities and response mechanisms. This inconsistency in the government's approach is a clear indication of partiality and systemic discrimination. The absence of any significant action or rewards for those missing from tribal communities undermines the state's commitment to equality and justice for all citizens. These lapses in addressing the disappearances of marginalized groups not only highlight the systemic challenges they face but also create an atmosphere of distrust and fear among the affected communities.

The situation calls for urgent reform in the government's approach to missing persons cases to ensure that every citizen, regardless of their community, is treated with fairness and dignity. Failure to act could result in further alienation of the tribal population, who feel increasingly marginalized and ignored.

BHALLA CHAIRS FIRST GOVERNOR-IN-COUNCIL MEETING

Imphal, March 25: Manipur Governor Ajay Kumar Bhalla chaired the first meeting of the governor-in-council on Tuesday, a statement said.

Crucial developmental and administrative matters were discussed in the meeting, it said.

Approvals were also given to some proposals, it added, without mentioning the details.

Chief Secretary Prashant Kumar Singh, principal secretaries, commissioners and administrative secretaries of various departments attended the meeting, the statement said.

President's Rule was imposed in the state on February 13, following which the Council of Ministers was dissolved.

The governor is carrying on with the administration of the state on behalf of the president.

Earlier in the day, Bhalla met National Highways and Infrastructure Development Corporation Limited (NHIDCL) MD Krishnan Kumar at the Raj Bhavan.

He updated the governor on the progress of various national highway projects underway in the state, and also discussed key challenges being faced in their implementation.

Bhalla said necessary measures should be taken to address these challenges so that timely completion of the projects can be ensured, a statement said.

13 POLITICAL PARTIES TO URGE CENTRE TO DEFER DELIMITATION EXERCISE IN MANIPUR



New Delhi, March 30: Representatives of at least 13 political parties have agreed to formally request the central government to postpone the delimitation exercise in Manipur, as directed by the Supreme Court, until the “errors” in the 2001 census are rectified.

While parties such as the NPP, JD(U), CPI(M), RPI (Athawale), Manipur Peoples’ Party, CPI, TMC, AAP, NCP(SCP), Shiv Sena, BSP, Forward Bloc, and RSP were present during a meeting in Imphal on Tuesday, the BJP and Congress chose not to attend the meeting.

The Supreme Court recently directed the Centre to complete the delimitation process in Arunachal Pradesh, Nagaland, and Manipur within the next three months.

“Leaders of various political parties participated in the discussions, aimed at addressing concerns and formulating a collective approach regarding the upcoming delimitation process. Based on that, it was resolved that no delimitation be conducted till the errors in the 2001 census are rectified,” NPP state president Y Joykumar said after the meeting.

“It was also resolved to appeal to the Centre that the delimitation be deferred till 2026, after which the national delimitation is likely to be conducted based on the new Census. Under the prevailing situation, delimitation is not feasible,” he added.

The apex court had previously raised concerns over the delay in carrying out the delimitation exercise in these states despite a 2020 presidential order rescinding the deferment of the process.

Meanwhile, Manipur BJP legislator Rajkumar Imo Singh has written to Union Home Minister Amit Shah, seeking a transparent and inclusive delimitation process in the state.

In the letter to the Union Home Minister, Singh requested the completion of the National Register of Citizens (NRC) process and removal of bogus voters from electoral rolls before the delimitation exercise begins in Manipur. (Northeast News)

NSCN-IM'S MISINFORMATION CAMPAIGN EXPLOITS ETHNIC TENSIONS FOR GREATER NAGALIM

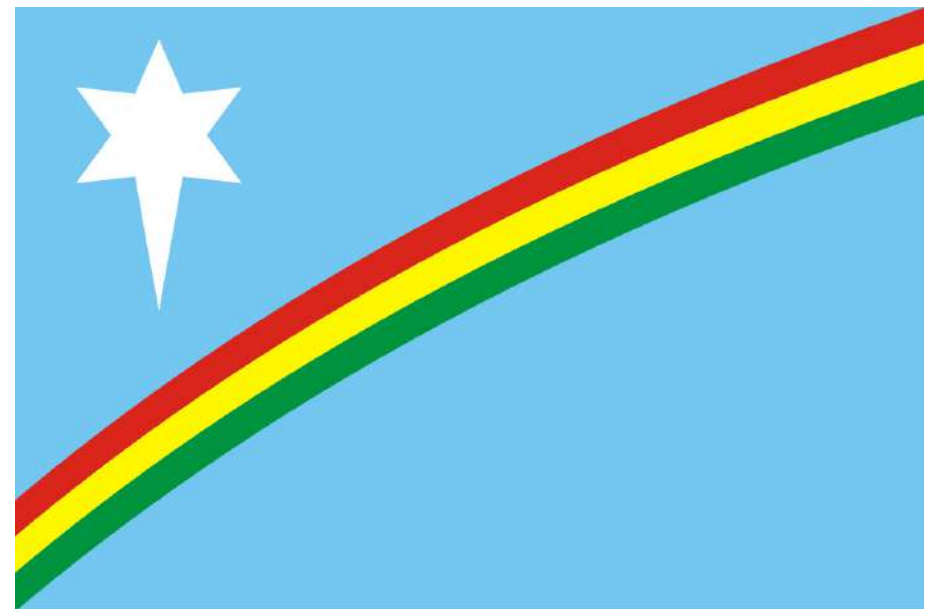
Lamka, March 30: The National Socialist Council of Nagaland-Isak Muivah (NSCN-IM) has been intensifying its misinformation campaign, leveling baseless allegations against various security forces, including the Assam Rifles, Border Security Force (BSF), and the Manipur Police. These accusations seem strategically aimed at advancing the group's longstanding objective of creating a Greater Nagalim by attempting to displace Kuki communities from Naga-designated areas in Manipur.

The NSCN-IM, which is primarily composed of Manipur Nagas, has faced significant distrust in Nagaland. Despite decades of ceasefire, the group has persistently worked to separate Naga-inhabited areas of Manipur and merge them with Nagaland to form a larger Naga homeland, known as "Greater Nagalim." This contentious objective has sparked tension, particularly with other communities, as the NSCN-IM's actions continue to stir divisions in the region.

False Allegations Against Security Forces

Allegations Against Assam Rifles

In September 2024, the NSCN-IM accused the Assam Rifles of collaborating with the Kuki National Army-Burma (KNA-B) in an ambush against its cadres on September 3, 2024. However, the Assam Rifles swiftly rejected these claims as "baseless" and "misleading." They reaffirmed their commitment to maintaining law and order impartially and urged the media to verify facts before reporting such sensitive information to avoid disrupting peace in the region. After the rebuttal, the NSCN-IM issued a clarification, acknowledging the misinterpretation and expressing regret for making unsupported allegations.



Allegations Against Border Security Force (BSF)
The NSCN-IM also accused the BSF of facilitating the illegal transportation of unidentified immigrants from Churachandpur district to Kuki settlements in Ukhrul district. They claim this is part of a larger strategy to alter the demographic structure of the region and strengthen the presence of Kuki militants in Naga-inhabited areas. Additionally, the group accused the BSF of guarding the Kuki militant camp at Molhang Kuki village, alleging military cooperation between India's paramilitary forces and Kuki militant groups.

Allegations Against Manipur Police

In December 2024, the NSCN-IM accused the Superintendent of Police (SP) in Ukhrul of colluding with Kuki militants to facilitate the transportation of concealed supplies to Molhang Kuki village. The Manipur Police strongly refuted these allegations, calling them "blatantly false." They clarified that, under directives from Police Headquarters, Ukhrul

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District Police provided guides and security escorts to BSF teams on December 12 and 19, 2024, solely to aid in the construction of security barracks.

Exploiting Ethnic Tensions for Political Gain

The timing of these allegations coincides with the ongoing ethnic violence between the Meitei and Kuki communities in Manipur. The NSCN-IM's actions appear to be an attempt to exploit this unrest to further their agenda of integrating Naga-inhabited areas of Manipur into Nagaland, which would help realize their vision of 'Greater Nagalim.' This strategy seems to involve creating divisions and displacing other ethnic groups, particularly the Kuki, to consolidate territorial control.

Despite these efforts, the NSCN-IM faces significant internal resistance. Many Naga groups in Nagaland are skeptical of the integration of Manipur's Naga areas with Nagaland. There is concern that such a merger would disrupt the political balance, particularly given the fact that the majority of NSCN-IM's leadership hails from Manipur. The group's strong opposition to the Register of Indigenous Inhabitants of Nagaland (RIIN) is also viewed as an anti-Nagaland stance, further complicating its objectives.

The group's ultimate goal is to break away from Manipur and establish a separate political entity. Ironically,

many Meiteis, caught in the midst of the ongoing ethnic clashes, mistakenly view the NSCN-IM as a force supporting their cause, not realizing that the NSCN-IM is fundamentally opposed to the Meitei community and seeks to fracture Manipur as a whole.

Final Thoughts

The NSCN-IM's dissemination of misinformation and unfounded allegations appears to be a calculated effort to manipulate ongoing ethnic tensions for their territorial ambitions. While their attempts to discredit security forces have been met with swift rebuttals, these actions reveal deeper political motives. The internal divisions and resistance they face underscore the challenges in realizing their vision of 'Greater Nagalim.'

As security agencies and local communities continue to counter these claims, it is crucial for the public to stay informed and recognize the true intentions of the NSCN-IM. The situation in Manipur requires a careful approach, and the manipulation of ethnic tensions for political gain must not be allowed to undermine the integrity and harmony of the region.



All diplomacy is a continuation of war by other means.

— Zhou Enlai



OPINION

No, Home Minister, the Situation Is Not Even Close to Normal in Manipur

Navin Upadhyay

Home Minister Amit Shah's assertion on Friday night at the Times Now Summit 2025 that "normal life has resumed in Manipur" and "things are gradually moving in a positive direction" presents an optimistic view that contrasts with the stark reality on the ground.

Undoubtedly, measures such as the imposition of President's Rule, efforts to recover thousands of stolen weapons, and the improved movement of commercial vehicles across the state are positive steps. The substantial deployment of security forces and the appointment of an experienced bureaucrat like Ajay Bhalla further demonstrate the Centre's commitment to restoring stability.

It's clear that the government is working to steer the state back on track, but the lived reality of Manipur's people paints a far bleaker picture—one marked by unrelenting strife, widespread displacement, and deep despair. Far from normalcy, the state remains engulfed in ethnic tensions and economic devastation, where even basic freedoms, such as safe travel, feel like a distant hope.

Claims of "normalcy" fall flat when dozens of videos surface at regular intervals, showing armed groups

training, proudly displaying their weapons, or casually playing football with AK-47 rifles slung over their shoulders. When no action has been taken against the perpetrators of the May 3, 2023, mayhem and arson—and its aftermath—regardless of which side they belong to, how can we even speak of normalcy?

How can there be any semblance of normalcy when over 60,000 people remain confined to relief camps nearly two years after ethnic violence erupted between the valley-based Meiteis and the hill-dwelling Kuki-Zo tribes in May 2023? These camps, overcrowded and underfunded, are no longer temporary shelters but semi-permanent homes for families who have lost everything—land, livelihoods, and loved ones. Children grow up amid squalor, with little to no access to proper education, while adults face an uncertain future, unable to return to villages still scarred by arson and bloodshed.

The Home Minister's optimism ignores the chilling reality of ethnic segregation. While commercial

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goods may move under armed escorts, private travel is a perilous gamble. Meiteis cannot venture into the Kuki-dominated hills without risking abduction or death, and Kukis face the same fate in the Imphal Valley. For Kukis, Imphal's airport is out of bounds, forcing them to travel all the way to Aizawl in Mizoram to catch a flight. Similarly, those needing advanced medical treatment cannot risk traveling to Imphal's upgraded hospitals and must journey to Mizoram instead. This isn't normalcy—it's a state of siege, with communities barricaded from one another, their social and economic ties severed.

The tension is so acute that even a Supreme Court judge couldn't bridge the divide. On March 22, 2025, Justice N. Kotiswar Singh, a Meitei, was part of a six-member delegation led by Justice B.R. Gavai to assess the situation of internally displaced persons and strengthen legal support in the strife-torn state. But the Churachandpur District Bar Association (CDBA) explicitly warned that "Lordships belonging to the Meitei community" should not step into the Kuki-majority district, citing "peace and public order."

This wasn't an isolated protest but a symptom of a deeper malaise: a governance system so fractured that even judicial officers cannot function across ethnic lines. Justice Singh was forced to detour to Bishnupur while his colleagues proceeded to Churachandpur, a stark illustration of how ethnic divisions paralyze even the highest institutions.

Meanwhile, thousands of sophisticated weapons—looted from police armories during the initial unrest or smuggled across porous borders—remain in the hands of militias. These include assault rifles, grenades, and even rocket launchers, wielded by over 30 armed groups with agendas ranging from ethnic supremacy

to insurgency to profit.

The drug trade adds another layer of chaos. Manipur's proximity to the Golden Triangle has turned it into a trafficking hub, with heroin and methamphetamine flooding the region. Armed groups and corrupt officials rake in profits, funding their arsenals while poppy fields encroach on traditional farmland. This illicit economy doesn't just undermine security—it strangles legitimate commerce.

Tourism, once a lifeline, has evaporated, with hotel occupancy plummeting to 20 percent. Private taxi operators, unable to ply routes safely, have gone out of business. Markets limp along under curfews, and infrastructure—roads, schools, power lines—crumbles unrepaired.

Shah's claim of a "positive direction" also overlooks simmering inter-tribal tensions beyond the Meitei-Kuki divide. Recent clashes between the Hmar and Zo tribes in late 2024 and early 2025 have displaced hundreds more, while the Naga demand for territorial integration continues to stoke unrest.

The Naga push for a unified territory, championed by groups like the NSCN-IM, clashes with both the state government and other communities like the Meiteis, who oppose any redrawing of boundaries. These conflicts, layered atop the murderous rivalry between Kuki-Zo and Meitei groups, show a state unraveling along multiple fault lines. Peace talks may be underway, but they falter against mutual distrust and the intransigence of hardline factions.

The human toll is incalculable. Over 260 lives have been lost since May 2023, but the damage

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extends far beyond the body count. A mental health crisis festers as survivors grapple with grief, trauma, and hopelessness. Children in relief camps witness violence instead of attending school; parents mourn without closure. The social fabric—once a vibrant tapestry of diverse tribes—lies in tatters, replaced by suspicion and hate.

President's Rule may have been a necessary step, but it has created a political vacuum, leaving the state adrift under a distant bureaucracy. Local leaders accuse the central administration of being disconnected from ground realities, while bureaucratic inertia hampers swift action. Normal life hasn't resumed—it's been replaced by a fragile limbo where survival, not progress, is the daily goal.

The following factors highlight why the situation in Manipur is far from normal or even near normal:

Mass Displacement & Humanitarian Crisis: Over 60,000 remain in overcrowded, under-resourced relief camps since 2023, lacking sanitation, healthcare, and education, with no return timeline.

Judicial Paralysis: On March 22, 2025, Meitei Judge N. Kotiswar Singh couldn't visit Kuki-majority Churachandpur due to objections from the local bar association, reflecting ethnic tensions.

Administrative Breakdown: Ethnic divisions block officials from working across community lines, delaying justice and eroding trust in institutions.

Proliferation of Arms: Thousands of looted or smuggled weapons (rifles, grenades, rocket launchers) stay with militias, fueling violence as recovery falters.

Armed Groups: Over 30 factions tied to ethnic, insurgent, or criminal goals extort, attack, and control territory, hindering peace efforts.

Inter-Tribal Tensions: Disputes among Nagas, Hmars, and Zos over land and power turn Manipur's diversity into a conflict source.

Hmar-Zo Clashes: Late 2024 and early 2025 skirmishes in hill districts between Hmar and Zo tribes displaced hundreds, adding new fault lines.

Naga Territorial Demand: The unresolved Naga push for a unified territory, led by NSCN-IM, fuels clashes and instability.

Drug Smuggling: Proximity to the Golden Triangle drives drug trafficking, with profits funding armed groups and poppy fields overtaking farms.

Political Vacuum: President's Rule leaves Manipur without an elected government, stalling policy and reconstruction.

Kuki-Zo vs. Meitei Rivalry:** Ongoing vengeance between Kuki-Zo and Meitei groups, rooted in land and power disputes, defies peace talks.

Economic Stagnation: Violence has crippled markets, tourism, and schools, with unrepaired infrastructure deepening decay.

Mental Health Crisis: Trauma and eroded social ties plague survivors, with scarce mental health support delaying recovery.

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ThePrint

FEATURED ARTICLE

Running buses won't bring peace to Manipur. Govt must seek to engage, not erase

Praveen Swami

For hours, fragments of burning paper drizzled on the perfectly manicured lawns of the Raj Bhawan in Imphal, covering the grass with the ashes of centuries of learning and literature. Two decades ago this April, activists of the Meetei Erol Eyek Loinasillo Apunba Lup, seeking to eradicate the Bengali script from their homeland with matches and buckets of kerosene, set fire to the Manipur State Central Library. Estimates suggest 145,000 books, some of them priceless manuscripts, were lost in the arson, for which no one was punished.

Libraries are a small, even trivial, loss compared to the lives lost, the brutal violence, and the ethnic cleansing Manipur has faced since 2023. Yet, the burning of the library offers an opportunity to reflect on the forces that engendered the ethnic warfare and consider how they might be engaged.

Early this month, the Centre began what can only be described as an effort to play-act normality—ordering bus services to resume across the state's fraught ethnic borders. To no one's surprise, the peace-buses led to more bloodshed. Fighting between ethnic groups continues, meanwhile, as rival chauvinists seek to assert territorial sovereignty.

Land has, in fact, become the only truth that matters: The houses in Imphal's neighbourhoods like New

Lambulane or those near the old palace at Haokip Veng, once home to the ethnic Kuki elite in the city, remain shuttered, with an ever-present risk of being seized by the ethnic Meitei militia Arambai Tenggol. Tens of thousands of ethnic Meitei, meanwhile, stay in refugee camps in Bishnupur, their lands and homes emptied by the prospect of attack by Kuki-Zo insurgent units.

To many, the idea of catching a bus home might seem faintly ridiculous, even insulting.

A divided city

For a brief while in the 1970s, we know from anthropologist Duncan McDuaie-Ra's luminous book on Imphal, *Borderland City in New India*, that it might have been possible to conceive of Imphal as a cosmopolitan, multicultural city, much like Shillong. The yellow-and-red cube-shaped Shankar Talkies was once among the spaces where Imphal residents of all ethnicities shared space to watch Hindi pop films. Early in the 2000s, though, ethnic Meitei insurgents ordered Hindi films banned as part of a broader programme to enforce the use of the Meitei Mayek script and language.

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Till recently, the Shankar Talkies building was used by the Spirit of Faith Church, an evangelical sect seeking to draw Meitei converts to Christianity. Those converts, journalist Makepeace Sitlhou has reported, had to flee, facing threats from Arambai Tenggol.

Imphal's Rupmahal—once the beating heart of its politically charged performance theatre scene—was also killed off by the Hindi movie ban. The theatre's courtyard has become a market, with vendors selling knock-off clothing brought from China through Myanmar.

Arambam Somorendra, one of the protagonists of Manipur's new theatre and an early participant in the United National Liberation Front's (UNLF) insurgency against the Indian state, was among those who helped give Rupmahal its special place. He was assassinated in 2000, allegedly by the cadre of a rival breakaway group, the Kanglei Yawol Kanna Lup. The banners carried above his funeral procession proclaimed a line from one of his poems: "On your fields, today, lie scattered the blood drops of your son." The killers were not named, though; there were no prosecutions.

For much of the 1990s—in large part because of the anti-India insurgency men like Arambam Somorendra helped set off—Imphal remained a curfewed city—the few venues for the production of a metropolitan culture that might transcend ethnicity. Leaving aside the small, illegal liquor shops in neighbourhoods like Kabui Khul, which drew men from all sections of society, cultural life remained regulated by the demands of ethnic belonging and tradition.

Early in the new millennium, Imphal sprouted new glass-and-steel buildings, appearing to transform itself from a quiet provincial town into a beacon of modernity. Largely to compensate for dysfunctional public health services, spanking-new specialist hospitals grew in the city. Tuition and coaching centres preparing students for competitive examinations expanded dramatically. The

government's plans to build a new highway linking Imphal through Moreh to Bangkok promised dramatic new economic opportunities.

The new Imphal, which emerged after the Armed Forces Special Powers Act (AFSPA) was lifted from the city in 2004, was suffused with K-pop-inspired bands, cafés, and fashion contests. This new youth culture, it would turn out, elided over the problem of ethnic identity instead of addressing it.

The shadow of history

Following Manipur's incorporation into the British Empire in 1894, the relationship between the Meitei of the Imphal plains and the peoples of the hills around them changed dramatically. The Hindu rulers of Manipur, like kings elsewhere in India, had long treated Adivasi populations as chattels. The Empire ended slavery but replaced it with a system of forced labour. Lambus, or headmen, were appointed from the Meitei community to secure labour and revenue from the hill people and meet the Empire's endless need for native bodies.

The Maharaja of Manipur, among other native rulers, provided Nagas, Lushai and Meitei to serve in the war effort of 1914-1918—communities who, as colonial army officer Leslie Shakespear noted, "had in many cases done this sort of work for Government before in border expeditions, and knew the work." The rewards included a lifetime exemption from forced free labour.

Large-scale rebellions against colonial authority were common. The Kukis fought a protracted insurgency against the British in 1917-1919. From 1934, political scientist Homen Borgohain records, women-led insurrections broke out over levies on rice.

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The independence of India failed to address these problems. Even though Manipur had authored its own Constitution in 1947—and conducted elections where, as historian Priyadarshni M Gangte writes, each candidate had a ballot box of their own bearing their photograph—it was only accorded the status of so-called C-category state or one with no elected leadership.

Leaders of the Meitei insurgency against India, like the charismatic Hijam Irabot Singh, believed that an alliance of all of Manipur's ethnic communities was needed to build a new, socialist order. Early insurgent groups also sought to expel Marwari and Bengali settlers who had arrived from the plains. Tensions flared. In 1969, when then-Prime Minister Indira Gandhi visited Imphal, police had to open fire on protestors to maintain order.

The insurgent leadership could, however, never find the means to deliver on their own vision of an inclusive Manipur. The anti-India insurgency threw its weight behind reviving pre-Hindu cultural traditions and faith among the Meitei, excluding groups like the Kuki and Naga.

In 1993, Kuki communities were savagely attacked by the National Socialist Council of Nagalim in an effort to evict them from Naga territory. "Women raped and killed," Sudeep Chakravarti records in his superb account of the conflict, "Children burnt alive in a church. Children killed in transit camps. 1994. Several women were raped and killed while out collecting herbs. Twenty-five men were shot to death with automatic weapons after their hands were tied at the back."

Kuki insurgents armed themselves—leading on, almost inexorably, to conflict with the ethnic-Meitei groups which had been operating through their territories. Even after ceasefires were signed between the government and Naga and Kuki groups, skirmishing went on—often for control of territories from which to extort government contractors and civil servants.

A murderous progress

Economic development, McDuie-Ra writes, further contributed to the ethnic tensions. Ethnic Meitei, faced with rapid demographic growth from 1951 to 1961, began fearing their community would be marginalised. The changing status of traditionally underprivileged ethnic groups also caused concern. Enabled by missionary education and rents extracted from the region's notoriously corrupt development programmes, a small Kuki elite emerged. Their presence in the bureaucracy, the result of reservations, as well as business success, stoked the resentments of the ethnic-Meitei underclass.

To capitalise on these resentments, the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) sought to create Hindu nationalist mythos, linking the Meitei to a broader Indian identity. In 2018, former chief minister N Biren Singh proclaimed that in the time of Krishna, god made the Northeast by marrying the princess of Arunachal Pradesh. Kukis became part of this new Hindutva's demonology.

Finding peace in Manipur requires political engagement that seeks to engage, rather than erase: To build a library that allows all texts, so to speak, rather than none. Fearing the consequences of conflict in the Northeast, the Government of India has engaged ethnic insurgents, using one to contain the other. This has, perversely, ended up perpetuating the conflict. The time has come for New Delhi to turn its attention from running buses to thinking about what democratic engagement might really mean.

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FEATURED ARTICLE

India: Ethnic Clashes Restart in Manipur
Use President's Rule to End Abuse, Expand Aid

India's northeastern state of Manipur has faced renewed violence since its divisive chief minister resigned and the government imposed the president's rule on February 13, 2025, Human Rights Watch said today.

At least five people have died and scores injured, including security force members, in recent clashes. On March 8, a man was killed and several were injured in Kangpokpi district when violence broke out after the authorities attempted to restore transportation connections across the state. On March 19, another man was killed following clashes between two tribal communities in the state's Churachandpur district. The central government led by Prime Minister Narendra Modi should act to end the violence, which has killed more than 260 people and displaced over 60,000 since May 2023, and ensure humanitarian aid reaches all affected. Armed militant groups, government-backed vigilantes, and state security forces should be held accountable for abuses.

"The resignation of Manipur's divisive chief minister hasn't ended the distrust among communities that fuels the violence," said Elaine Pearson, Asia director at Human Rights Watch. "President's rule should be seen as an opportunity to restore security, impartially prosecute those responsible for abuses, and end the

violence in Manipur in a rights-respecting manner."

From February to March 2025, Human Rights Watch interviewed 15 people, including human rights activists, lawyers, community organizers, healthcare workers, journalists, and academics from the Meitei and the Kuki-Zo communities affected by the violence in Manipur.

Ethnic violence between the predominant Meitei community, which is mostly Hindu, and the tribal Kuki-Zo communities, which are largely Christian, has wracked Manipur and its population of estimated 3.2 million for nearly two years. Armed militant groups on both sides, long dormant, have become active again.

The state government led by Chief Minister N. Biren Singh of the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) that was in power until February 9, 2025, demonstrated a pro-Meitei bias in its response to the violence. Singh's administration, including the police, allegedly protected Meitei vigilante groups such as the Arambai Tenggol and Meitei Leepun, which have looted weapons from state armories and

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engaged in mob attacks on the Kuki-Zo. Singh denied allegations of bias.

The state has effectively been split into two ethnic zones separated by buffer areas with police outposts and security force patrols. The valley, with the state capital, Imphal, administrative offices, healthcare centers, and the primary airport, is dominated by the majority Meitei community, while Kuki-Zo and other tribal communities are largely confined to the hills.

Several Kuki women have reported sexual violence including rape by Meitei men. Meitei mobs, including armed militants, have burned down, attacked, and vandalized homes, businesses, villages, and places of worship, mostly targeting the Kuki-Zo community. In September 2024, suspected Kuki militants attacked villages in West Imphal district and in Bishnupur district, killing three Meitei people. In November, suspected Kuki militants abducted and killed three Meitei women and three children in Jiribam district, while two men were burned to death.

The Modi administration has called for recovery of stolen weapons, and has embarked upon talks to reduce violence. Many Manipuris believe the central government should have acted sooner. “We had begged the prime minister to intervene, but he just didn’t care, while hundreds were killed and injured,” one activist said. “Now community ties have completely broken down.”

In August 2023, India’s Supreme Court expressed concerns over what it termed the “absolute breakdown of law and order” in Manipur. It noted that “there are serious allegations including witness statements indicating that the law-enforcing machinery has been inept in controlling the violence and, in certain situations, colluded with the perpetrators,” and called for an investigation into the allegations.

A 40-year-old Kuki farmer from Kangpokpi district has been living with his family in a community-run relief camp in Churachandpur district since a Meitei mob attack in May 2023. “There were more than 200 people along with about a dozen policemen and the mob had sophisticated weapons,” he said. “We had no means to defend ourselves, so we ran toward the jungle. We climbed up on the trees and we saw them burn the houses and the church with kerosene and petrol that they carried with them.”

The former state government’s support for Meitei militants and its complicity in the violence, has eroded trust in the rule of law and revived Kuki-Zo demands for a separate federally administered territory.

Indian authorities should demobilize and disarm vigilante groups, ensure prompt reparation for victims and survivors of abuses, and provide for impartial justice and accountability measures, Human Rights Watch said. All internally displaced people should be provided adequate food, shelter, clean water, appropriate clothing, essential medical services, sanitation, education for children, and other basic assistance and protection services in line with international human rights law, irrespective of religion, ethnicity, or citizenship status.

The authorities should ensure that people have the right to return when conditions are in place for a safe and voluntary process carried out in accordance with the United Nations Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement, with full and meaningful participation of all affected communities, including the equal participation of women.

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Security forces should abide by the UN Basic Principles on the Use of Force and Firearms by Law Enforcement Officials, which require security forces to use the minimum necessary force at all times. In dispersing violent assemblies, firearms may only be used when other less harmful means are not practicable but to the minimum extent necessary. Law enforcement officers may only intentionally resort to lethal force when strictly unavoidable to protect life.

The Indian government has announced measures to disarm groups, restore free movement of vehicles, and dismantle community checkpoints to reverse the segregation of communities and restore normalcy in the state.

“The Indian government has taken necessary first steps but needs to make a genuine commitment to respect human rights, provide redress and rehabilitation for victims, and ensure impartial justice,” Pearson said. “The communities need to regain trust in each other but also in the government for this violence to end.”

Human Rights Abuses in Manipur**State Bias, Complicity in Abuse**

While chief minister, N. Biren Singh replicated many of the BJP’s divisive policies used nationally to promote Hindu majoritarianism in Manipur state. He claimed without any basis that the Kukis and other mostly Christian tribal groups were providing sanctuary to undocumented immigrants from Myanmar and engaging in drug trafficking and deforestation. Meitei community members echoed the accusations that the Kuki-Zo were cultivating poppies for the illegal drug trade, and unfairly benefiting from government quotas for tribal groups in jobs and education. The Kuki-Zo community alleged that the authorities were engaged in discriminatory practices such as escalating the eviction of villagers from forest areas. This led to

rising tensions for months before the outbreak of violence in May 2023.

“If at all reconciliation has to happen, then the Indian state must be held accountable,” a Meitei academic said. “The state is an active party in this conflict.”

Singh denied allegations of bias, saying “I am chief minister of every community, be it Meiteis, Kukis or Nagas,” and that he “saved the state from illegal migration, illegal poppy cultivation.” His government told the Supreme Court in September 2023 that, “The Petitioners have made attempts to portray an incorrect position before this Hon’ble Court between two communities where only one community is portrayed as the victim and the other as the aggressor. The State and Union of India have always maintained a neutral stand on the issue and have specifically not sought to selectively highlight some incidents over others.”

Violence erupted on May 3, 2023, after tribal communities protested a Manipur High Court order granting the Meitei community certain benefits, including land ownership in protected areas and quotas in government jobs. In India, such affirmative action is usually reserved for tribal groups to correct historical and structural inequity and discrimination. The Manipur High Court revoked the contentious order in February 2024.

The role of then-Chief Minister Singh in fomenting violence became clear when activists submitted audio tapes to the Ministry of Home Affairs Commission of Inquiry and to the Supreme Court that allegedly contained

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recordings from a 2023 meeting in the chief minister's official residence. An independent news website, the Wire, which obtained a copy of the recordings, said it had confirmed the date, subject, and contents. On audio, a voice, apparently Singh's, describes colluding in the bombing of Kuki villages and shielding Meitei attackers. The then-chief minister and his government said the tapes were "doctored."

Political Patronage for Civilian Militias

The Manipur state government provided political patronage to armed vigilante groups such as Arambai Tenggol and Meitei Leepun that support the Meitei community. One BJP lawmaker is affiliated with Arambai Tenggol, while the founder of Meitei Leepun is a former member of an organization affiliated with the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh, BJP's ideological parent organization. The former chief minister had publicly expressed support for Arambai Tenggol.

Following the May 2023 violence, the media reported that mobs including members of Meitei vigilante groups looted more than 6,000 weapons from armories and police stations. About 2,500 have been recovered. The Kuki-Zo communities have alleged that these groups committed assaults, sexual violence, and murder. The Manipur authorities failed to investigate or take action against members of Arambai Tenggol and Meitei Leepun who were implicated in the abuses.

The Meitei groups have also attacked people from their own community who have spoken out against them.

The Imphal-based human rights activist Babloo Loitongbam, a Meitei, faced threats and harassment from the two groups after he criticized their violent actions in a television news interview in May 2023. In October 2023, Meitei Leepun held a news conference, forbidding Loitongbam from appearing on public platforms. A group of about 30 men, allegedly belonging

to Arambai Tenggol, vandalized his house. He was also forced to make a public apology for his earlier statement after the groups threatened to burn down his home. In September 2024, Meitei Leepun held another news conference, accusing him of collaborating with the Kuki community against Meitei interests.

In November, UN Human Rights experts wrote to the Indian government expressing concern over the smear campaign against Loitongbam: "We are further concerned that the authorities appear to have taken little to no action in addressing the threats which he and his family face."

Jos Chongtham, 27, a documentary filmmaker who was investigating the chief minister's policies on drugs, was abducted in September 2024, allegedly by about 50 members of Meitei Leepun. He told Human Rights Watch that he was held for about eight hours and mistreated. "They confiscated my phone and finally released me saying that I should appear before them whenever they call me," he said. After Chongtham filed a police report about the kidnapping and assault and held a news conference, he says he "received constant death threats" on his phone and eventually fled Manipur.

Chongtham said this did not stop the attacks against his family. In October 2024, members of Arambai Tenggol went to his house, assaulted his father, confiscated the phones of his family members, and detained them for several hours. "They gave my family an ultimatum that they should produce me within three days, or else they would burn down my home, would try to locate and execute me," he said.

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The police, instead of investigating the attack against him and his family, put pressure on them to withdraw their complaint. “In March 2025,” he said, “the police went to my house to ask my family to rescind the FIR [First Information Report required to begin a police investigation] against Meitei Leepun and withdraw the complaint made to the National Human Rights Commission.”

In October 2023, members of Meitei militant groups attacked the house of a former police officer, Brinda Thounaojam, after she criticized Meitei Leepun and Arambai Tenggol. She was made to apologize. Her house was attacked again in December 2023 after she criticized then-Chief Minister Singh.

Police Failure to Protect

Kuki community members have alleged that the police were siding with the Meitei community, did not protect them, and at times even joined the mobs. The Manipur police have denied any bias.

The media have reported numerous cases of violence in which the police failed to act, leading the Supreme Court to intervene. On May 4, 2023, a large group of Meiteis attacked a village in Kangpokpi district, trapping two Kuki men and three women. The mob killed the men and sexually assaulted the women, gang-raping one of them. The Meitei mob also stripped and paraded two of the women. After a video of the attacks emerged in July 2023, the Supreme Court ordered the federal Central Bureau of Investigation to investigate it along with other cases of sexual assault in Manipur.

In October 2023, the investigation concluded that although two of the women and one male victim managed to get inside a police car, “the driver suddenly drove and stopped the vehicle near the violent mob of around 1,000 people,” and that after the crowd took the

women, the police drove away “leaving the victims alone with the mob.” The authorities arrested six people in this case, but more than a year later, no charges have been filed against police officers or members of Meitei vigilante groups involved in this incident. The investigative authorities have made even less progress in incidents of sexual violence in other parts of the state that have not received the same level of public scrutiny.

In August 2023, the Supreme Court, accepting concerns over police complicity in abuses, created Special Investigation Teams overseen by senior police officers from outside Manipur, and appointed a former police commissioner from another state to monitor the overall investigation of cases as an added “layer of scrutiny.” The court also formed a committee of three former high court judges to oversee relief and rehabilitation.

The authorities have also failed to protect members of the Meitei community. In November 2024, about 35 armed Kuki militants attacked the camp of the Central Reserve Police Force, a paramilitary police, and the adjacent police station in Jiribam district, allegedly looking for “Meitei people.” They abducted and killed three women and three children including an 8-month-old infant from the Meitei community, and burned to death two older Meitei men. Security forces had provided shelter to several Meitei families since June 2023, after the violence extended to the area.

Delays and Failures of Access to Justice

In August 2023, the Supreme Court expressed “its dissatisfaction with the tardy pace of investigation.” It also noted the delays in recording witness statements, in making arrests even in

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cases involving “heinous offences,” and in ensuring medical examinations of victims.

As of December 2024, the 42 special investigation teams created by the Supreme Court had filed charges in only 6 percent of the 3,023 registered cases, including 126 murders, 9 cases of sexual crimes against women, and 2,888 cases of looting, arson, and other property crimes.

Growing Humanitarian Crisis

In government data submitted to the Supreme Court, 57,000 people are registered as living in 361 relief camps, displaced after the violence began. However, this does not account for people who found shelter with relatives, are staying in temporary housing, or have left the state due to the violence.

Meitei and Kuki community members and civil society groups have reported that most Meitei camps are being run with some government support, either sponsored by the local lawmaker or established in government buildings, such as colleges and sports complexes. In contrast, the Kuki camps are mostly housed in church compounds and are dependent on community contributions. “Government support has been sorely lacking,” said a journalist from the Kuki community. “People are surviving on kinship relations and the church.”

Displaced people from Kuki-Zo communities have limited access to proper healthcare, cramped living conditions, inadequate sanitation facilities, daily water shortages, a lack of nutritious food, and loss of livelihoods. A Kuki community organizer in Kangpokpi district said that the government was providing some food rations, “but not regularly or adequately. We need a lot of basic stuff that are being provided by the community.”

Healthcare access has emerged as one of the most pressing challenges for the Kuki Zo, because community members cannot go to Imphal, where the main hospitals are located. “The local hospital is so ill-equipped, we can’t take care of serious illnesses or injuries,” the community organizer in Kangpokpi said. “We have to transport the patients by road to another state, Assam or Nagaland.”

A government health worker who manages a community-run relief camp for 113 Kuki-Zo people in Churachandpur district said: “The government is providing very limited food so we are providing as much as we can and taking help from the church. Without the church we would not have been able to support these internally displaced people.” There is no drinking water in the camp, and people obtain it from a private school nearby, dependent on the school administration’s goodwill. There were two toilets, and an international humanitarian organization built three more. But none of them have piped water.

The 40-year-old Kuki farmer from Kangpokpi district who fled his home in May 2023 with his wife and three children, said: “We are suffering here so much. But I don’t think it is possible for Kukis and Meitei to live alongside each other anymore. We are very scared. We don’t think we will be safe if we return.”

Internet Shutdowns

The authorities shut down the internet in Manipur for over 200 days in 2023, from May to December, saying it was required to stop the spread of misinformation. Following a court order in July 2023, the state government restored broadband

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services with certain safeguards. But the mobile internet shutdown continued until December, denying access to a majority of the population since 96 percent of people access internet on their mobile phones.

In 2024, the authorities continued to shut down the internet in places affected by violence. “Internet shutdowns are frequent especially when there is escalation,” a professor in Churachandpur district said. “Whenever there is a problem, they blame the internet, not the issue.”

While misinformation played a significant role in instigating violence, including sexual violence, internet bans are not a solution to inadequate law enforcement. They violate multiple human rights, and only cause further harm by restricting access to credible information, with rumors encouraging retaliatory attacks.

A September 2023 fact-finding report from the Editors Guild of India said the internet shutdown had “a dramatic impact on reporting.” Since correspondents were not able to file stories from the hills, the Editors Guild said, the internet ban prevented an alternative perspective, instead vilifying the Kuki Zo:

The internet ban did not yield the expected peace dividends for the state government, as the law and order situation continued to spiral out of control. What was worse was that the narrative began to blame those who did not have a voice in this conflict.

Crackdown on Activists, Media

Following the issuance of the Editors Guild 2023 report, the Manipur police registered a criminal case against the group’s fact-finding team, which had visited Manipur for their research.

Manipur authorities also prosecuted other civil society activists and journalists for independent reporting on the violence.

In July 2023, a court in Manipur summoned an academic and two Kuki activists in cases filed by Meitei activists alleging that their media interviews had promoted enmity between communities. The same month, the Manipur Home Department asked the police to file a criminal case against members of the Zomi Students’ Federation Union, who published “The Inevitable Split: Documents on State sponsored ethnic cleansing in Manipur, 2023,” and to ban further publication of the book.

Manipur police also filed a criminal case against two feminist leaders and an independent advocate in July 2023 for their fact-finding mission, which found that the violence was “state-sponsored.” The charges included sedition, defamation, waging war against India, and promoting enmity between different groups, among others.

In December 2023, the Supreme Court stayed criminal proceedings against the journalist Makepeace Sitlhou after the Manipur police filed a case against her for defamation, criminal conspiracy, and promoting enmity between groups. Sitlhou was targeted for her critical remarks on social media against the Manipur government’s failure to control the violence in the state.

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THE SOCIAL MEDIA BUZZ

 **H S Benjamin Mate** 
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Isn't it perplexing that the Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) refrained from extending the Armed Forces Special Powers Act (AFSPA) to Meitei dominated nine valley police stations in Manipur, despite the alarming looting of 6,000 automatic rifles and 5 lakh ammunitions from state armories in these areas? Doesn't this omission seem even more striking when juxtaposed with the imposition of AFSPA in minority Christian areas of Manipur, effectively granting impunity to Central Security forces operating in these regions?



Doesn't this selective application of AFSPA raise questions about the government's motivations and potential biases in the alleged ethnic cleansing of Kuki-Zo communities? The devastating violence that has resulted in the loss of countless innocent lives, including women, children, and the elderly, and the destruction of over 350 churches, makes this selective application all the more egregious.

 **Maj Digvijay Singh Rawat, KC**
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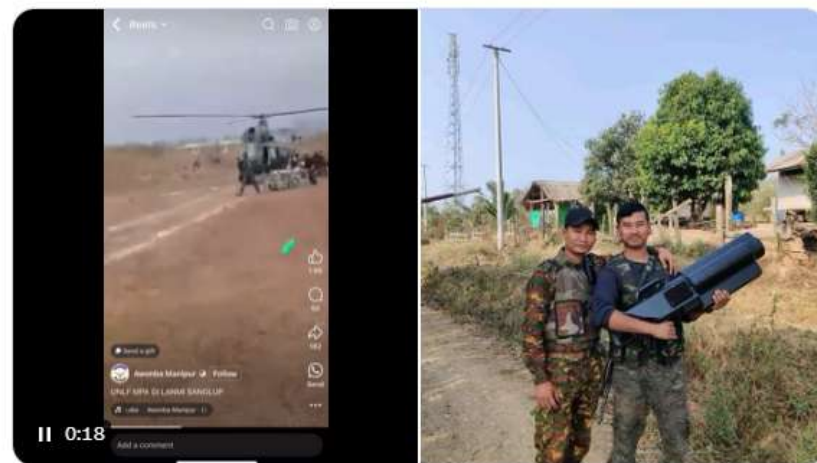
Myanmar army has been sheltering Indian insurgents groups like ULFA, PLA, UNLF, KYKL, KCP from more then 3 decades destabilizing India's NE and here we have as usual big heart sending relief shipments to Myanmar.

This is big heart which India shows even with hostile nations.

Myanmar army deliver arms and ammunition in helicopters  to Indian insurgents to destabilize India's NE and we send them relief materials.

We should undoubtedly help people of Burma but not through Junta.  

@FrontalForce @IndianSinghh @KreatelyMedia @elitepredatorss @TacticalKafir @_phoenix_fire_ @PaliwalAvi @India4Myanmar @indfoundation @PMOIndia @colhunnybakshi @sushantsareen @NEquaker @Spearcorps @sheehan920 @angshuman_ch @cvdom2021 @NUGMyanmar



POLITICAL NURTURING OF ARMS IN MANIPUR





JUDAS ISCARIOT OF KUKILAND

Born of a land rich in roots,
Raised among brothers of the same breath,
Bound by the blood of Kuki,
A child of faith, a bearer of Christ's name.

Yet, the whispers of greed called his name,
In the shadow of silver, love turned cold.
He stood with the enemy, his home left behind,
Traded peace for betrayal, and kin for gain.

But when his path led to sorrow's gate,
Who stood by him in his final hour?
The very land he abandoned mourned his fall,
Kuki hands laid flowers upon his grave.

When his body weakened, who prayed?
Who gave without question, without shame?
Kuki hearts, full of love, never wavered—
For in Kuki land, every soul is precious.

Yet, what remains of a name once trusted?
What is the worth of a life sold for silver?
To betray one's own is to lose oneself,
For love given is not always love returned.

~ Seineo KUKI