

06.11.2025

Moving beyond Revenge and Retribution to Truth, Justice and Reconciliation**Reply to the Meitei Heritage Society**

Issued by the PUCL – Secretariat of the Independent People's Tribunal

PUCL formally received a communication from the Meitei Heritage Society signed by 37 individuals and organizations titled, "Public Rebuttal of PUCLs Partisan Fact-Finding Report on Manipur"¹ to the Report of the 'Independent People's Tribunal the 'Ongoing Ethnic Conflict in Manipur'².

We are offering the following reply to the 16 issues posed by them. It should be pointed out that the Independent People's Tribunal (IPT) was formed by the PUCL but is independent of the PUCL. The Report released on 20th August, 2025 is the Report of the IPT. This reply is being issued by the Secretariat of the IPT formed with PUCL members and others to assist the Independent People's Tribunal. This Reply is being issued by the Secretariat.

1. Misinterpretation of data

The argument is made that the district-wise detection of 'foreigners' in Churachandpur is shown to be the least only to be contradicted by the table in the report. (Note: in the letter of the MHS sent to us the page referred to is page 235; this is incorrect. The actual page number in the Report is page 285).

The explanation given below is self-explanatory, which show that the allegations are misplaced.

- On page 285 of chapter 6.1.1 it is said "It is interesting that among the hill-districts, Churachandpur, despite its Kuki-Zo numerical dominance, seems to have attracted the least number of these immigrants. On the other hand, Chandel, Tengnoupal and Kamjong, with either predominantly Naga or mixed ethnic population have been preferred destinations for them."

The table on page 286 shows the district wise distribution of illegal immigrants. This Table has been directly taken from the Reply given in the

¹ <https://www.meiteiheritage.org/assets/docs/pucl/Rebuttal-to-PUCLs-report-on-Manipur-Crisis.pdf>

² <https://pucl.org/manage-reports/independent-peoples-tribunal-on-the-ongoing-ethnic-conflict-in-manipur/>

Manipur State Assembly by the then Manipur Chief Minister (who was also the Home Minister), Shri Biren Singh, on 02nd August, 2024, to a question raised by Shri Surjakumar Okram, MLA³.

The number of illegal immigrants listed district wise is as follows:

Kamjong (6199), Tengenoupal (2406), Chandel (1895) and the fourth is Churachandpur (150). In the rest of the 7 district ((Imphal West, Imphal East, Bishnupur, Thoubal, Kakching, Ukhrul, Kangpokpi) the figures of illegal immigrants reported is negligible.

Churachandpur is not the one with the highest number of illegal immigrants. The reason for these numbers is the geographic locations of these district as these are in border area with Myanmar. There is no misinterpretation as claimed. There are other reasoning/explanations given in the report which counter the allegations of increased illegal immigration of Kukis into specifically Kuki dominated areas. The Decadal Growth Rate (DGR) also indicates that population growth in Senapati district based on Population Survey of 2002 and 2021 is 241.40%, whereas the DGR for Churachandpur is only 19.91. (ref.: Table at pages 288-89).

- The declining ratio of Meitei/Manipuri language speakers in the State can be resulting due to out-migration from the State. The State records outflow to inflow ratio of migration at 3.32, highest among all the seven States of the North-east⁴. This suggests that the number of people migrating out of Manipur is three times more than those immigrating into it. (ref.: pg. 291-92)
- Another aspect is the differences in the Total Fertility Rate (TFR) of the Valley and the Hills. Generally, the TFR is inversely proportional to the extent of socio-economic development of a given region. As per the NFHS-5 (National Family Health Survey), the TFR of the State stands at 2.2 which is almost identical with the national average (2.2). However, the fertility rate, owing to the better development indices of the valley districts, is noticeably lower (1.7 to 2) than that of the Hill districts (2.5 to 3.3). The two factors, greater out-flow of population and the lower TFR in the Imphal valley area vis-à-vis the Hill districts, probably lead to the declining ratio of Meitei population in Manipur. Their share in the population at all India level has either remained constant or registered slight increase. (pages 291-92).

³ <https://www.satp.org/terrorism-update/10675-illegal-immigrants-detected-in-manipur-says-cm-n-biren-singh> . See also, <https://www.indiatoday.in/india/story/over-10000-illegal-migrants-detected-in-manipur-in-last-5-years-n-biren-singh-2576129-2024-08-03>

⁴ (Computed from Table D-2, Census of India 2011, also see Table 11 in Lusome and Bhagat, Migration in North-east India, Indian Journal of Labour Economics, 2020 Oct 24;63(4):1125–1141), URL : <https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC7585351/>

2. Reinforcing false narrative of eviction from land

While it is true that the evictions, which were carried out between October 24, 2015 and April 18, 2023 had affected the Meiteis the most and of the 413 families evicted from the illegal occupation of Reserved Forest areas, 280 families belong to Meitei (143 Meitei & 137 Meitei Pangal), 59 from Kuki, 38 from Naga, and 36 from the Nepali community. (as referred to in the rebuttal page no 1).

It is equally true that on February 15, 2023, the DC of Churachandpur district ordered a verification drive to identify 'illegal immigrants' in several villages under the Churachandpur and Mualnuam sub-divisions in south Manipur. In Churachandpur, Schedule Tribe and Schedule Caste population form 92.94 percent and 0.16 percent of the total population respectively⁵.

While in Mualnuam village Schedule Tribe (ST) constitutes 99.36 % of total population.⁶ This gave rise to anxieties on part of the Schedule Tribe. This is explained on page 106 of chapter 4.1.1.

At this juncture, it may be relevant here to consider that a 3-member Cabinet Sub-committee had been formed to review the steps taken for immediate identification of illegal immigrants from Myanmar and to prevent them from naturalization amongst native persons. The Committee also was tasked to review the state of shelters built in different district to house such illegal immigrants identified. The 3-member Committee was headed by Shri Letpao Haokip, Minister as Chairman and Shri Awangboi Newman, Minister and Shri Basanta Kumar Singh, Minister, as members.

The Committee visited Hotenphai village, Tengenpual district on 26.03.2023, Gamphazol village in Chandel District on 29.03.2023 and Singhat village in Churachandpur district on 01.04.2023 along with police, revenue and other departmental officials. The Report of the visit prepared by the Home Commissioner shows that the Committee met with local villagers and also those who had been forced to leave from Myanmar due to the war there. The Proceedings report that the District police in Chandel district had identified 628 illegal immigrants in the district. As regards Churachandpur the proceedings state that in February, 2023 verification drive was launched in Singhat, Chalnou and Sinzawl in Churachandpur district and that 129 illegal immigrants were detected and there is no recent influx from the IMB. Also since there was apprehension that illegal immigrants who had already entered Manipur might be hiding amongst the common population in Churachandpur town, the district police is doing verification drive.

3. Justifying Illegal Poppy Cultivation

In the entire report there is no justification for illegal poppy cultivation. The

⁵ <https://churachandpur.nic.in/about-district/demography/>

⁶ <https://www.census2011.co.in/data/village/269348-mualnuam-manipur.html>

report highlights how proliferation of hate speech, inflammatory messages and divisive rhetoric by political leaders fostered distrust, tensions and a volatile environment between the Meiteis and Kukis, weeks before the outburst of violence on 3rd May, 2023 (See Chapter 4.2.2, page 133). The narrative was also built by Chief Minister Shri Biren Singh to link tribal population to illegal immigration, poppy cultivation and drug dealing. The Report in section Chapter 4.2.3 expands on the manner by which the then CM stereotyped Kukis as poppy cultivators and illegal migrants and between pages 135 – 142 records the statements of the then Chief Minister and the responses it had invoked in building such a narrative.

The crucial issue to be noted is that the issue is not only poppy farming, but it involves drug manufacturing and trafficking which requires high level connections and access to highly placed officials and politicians. This is explored in detail in Chapter 6.4: 'Poppy Cultivation and Drug Trade' between pages 322 to 331 of the IPT Report.

At page 330 of Chapter 6.4, the report states: "On 25 February 2021 representatives from 33 communities in Manipur took a pledge to end poppy cultivation under the banner "All Communities Convention for a Pledge against Illegal Poppy Plantation" as a response to the Chief Minister's call to support the "War on Drugs" (Morung Express 2021⁷). It is also pertinent to note that in a deposition to the Jury, representatives of the United Naga Council stated that even Kuki organizations are against drugs as much as the Nagas are".

The Morung Express article referred to above, reports that on 25.02.2021, the assembled leaders representing various apex bodies of 33 communities in the presence of the then CM took a "collective pledge to work together towards complete destruction of illegal poppy cultivation and checking illicit drug businesses". The leaders collectively said: "... We solemnly pledge that we will support and contribute our best efforts to transform the war on drugs to a people's war. We further pledge we shall work for completely eradicating illegal poppy cultivation and other illicit drug businesses in any areas of our jurisdiction by any person from within or outside". The list of leaders of the various communities who took the pledge included a significant number of leaders of Kuki-Zo-Chin tribal communities apart from Nagas, Gorkhas and Mizos.

Considering the entirety of the testimonies of people who deposed before the Tribunal and the various supporting documents it is clear that the drug issue is widespread and affects all communities. However, the issue of drug production and trafficking is much more than mere poppy cultivation; while poppy cultivation has to and should be stopped, simultaneously the state's efforts should aim at the key pushers, traffickers and controllers of the drug trade, who many times are protected by a combination of powerful politicians, influential bureaucrats and senior police and security officials.

⁷ <https://morungexpress.com/manipur-33-communities-pledge-to-wipe-out-poppy-cultivation>

The key role played by highly placed politicians, belonging to the ruling party, is highlighted by an incident when on 19th June, 2018, Additional Superintendent of Police, Brinda Thounaojam raided the residence of Lhukhosei Zou, BJP member and Chairman of the 5th Autonomous District Council (ADC) of Chandel and reportedly seized 4,595 kgs of heroin, 2,80,200 “World is Yours’ amphetamine tablets weighing 28 kgs and huge amount of cash. The senior police officer filed an affidavit before the Manipur High Court in 2020 describing how she was pressurised by then Chief Minister Shri Biren Singh to shield Lhukhosei Zou, who belonged to the Kuki community and was described by Ms. Brinda as the “kingpin of the drug cartel”.⁸ It is revealing to point out that Lhukhosei Zou was acquitted by the NDPS Trial court in December, 2020.

The Superintendent of Police, K. Meghachandra Singh, provided a detailed breakdown of community-wise arrests for drug traffickers and poppy cultivators in Manipur in the last half-decade. The data reveals that, from 2017 to 2022, state enforcement agencies arrested 2,518 individuals involved in the illegal drug trade and poppy cultivation. Statistics on drug traders between 2017 and 2022 show that the Kuki-Chin, Meiteis, and Pangals (Muslims) accounted for 33%, 15%, and 43.5%, respectively, of the 2,438 drug traders apprehended. The point to be noted is that it is not just the Kukis, but also other communities who are involved with the drug trade.⁹

4. Contradicts facts, testimonies and own statements which conclude the violence started in Churachandpur with Kukis torching Meitei homes:

Prefatory Note

Chapter 1 of the report titled, ‘*Setting the Context*’ addressed the question as to how the conflict could continue unabated for more than 2 years despite the deployment of more than 100,000 paramilitary forces and internal state police. The chapter recounted the mainstream accounts of the immediate reasons for the conflict and examined the rumours galore and snowballing violence. Chapter 1.4, ‘*Search for truth: Going beyond the mainstream narrative*’ points out how the pattern of incidents raises doubts about mainstream media’s version of events as being very superficial. 6 key concerns were raised including the ethnicization of the state security forces and whether the 2 non-state actor armed groups, Arambai Tenggol (AT) and Meitei Lipun (ML) formed, supported and patronised by the former CM were present alongwith the police in Churachandpur on 3rd May, 2023 when clashes took place between Kukis and Meiteis.

In Chapter 4 titled ‘*Events of Violence*’ (pages 105 till 239) it was pointed out that the prolonged violence that had engulfed Manipur could not be studied as having erupted only on 3rd May, 2023 and that there was “a much more complex web of narratives” and that the aim is to establish a timeline of

⁸ <https://www.thenewsminute.com/news/police-woman-turn-politician-heart-manipur-crisis-181293>

⁹

https://www.researchgate.net/publication/393029635_Manipur_Conflict_An_analysis_of_causes_Claims_by_Meiteis_and_the_State_Government_and_Counterclaims_by_Kukis

- (a) events leading upto the events of 3rd May, 2023, i.e. the events that occurred prior to the outbreak of violence on 3rd May, 2023.
- (b) the events of 3rd May itself; and
- (c) the events that occurred after 3rd May, 2023, till the time the Tribunal covered the incidents - October, 2024 (when the recording of the last testimonies concluded).

The 134-page chapter relies on press statements by various organizations, media reports, government notices/ circulars and court documents and testimonies of witnesses who appeared before the Tribunal.

A Caveat

Given the complexity of the situation and simultaneous occurrence of violent incidents in many places geographically apart, the Report pointed out that “However, how and where the violence began, which group instigated it, has been an extremely contentious question. It has been difficult for any non-partisan report and even experts who testified to the Tribunal, to ascertain the accurate chain of events.” (Chapter 4.4 on page 161). This caveat should be kept in mind when reading the following response.

Immediate antecedents to the eruption of violence on 3rd May, 2023

The Report reconstructs ‘four parallel sequence of events taking place from February to April, 2023’:

- (1) Evictions and forceful demolitions of tribal villages followed by protests organised by ITLF;
- (2) Agitations, protests and advocacy by Meiteis demanding inclusion of Meiteis and Meitei Pangals in the ST List;
- (3) Protests against the violations of reservation norms for recruitment to RIMS;
- (4) Protests meetings and advocacy by tribal groups opposing the Meitei demand. (Ch. 4.1, page 105).

Between January to 2nd May, 2023, the Report documents rising tensions between Kuki and Meitei groups caused by the widespread proliferation of hate speech and divisive rhetoric furthering stereotypes based on false information, using social media platforms to spread inflammatory messages. (page 133). This was furthered by the then Chief Minister himself insinuating that Kuki communities are illegal immigrants, poppy cultivators and drug dealers. (pages 134 - 137).

Marking of Kuki houses with red mark prior to 3rd May, 2023

An issue that was repeatedly stated in the testimonies of Kuki deponents who were residing in Imphal was that their houses were selectively identified and marked prior to 3rd May, 2023. (Ch. 4.3.3, pages 152 to 157).

It needs to be pointed out that this charge of deliberate marking of Kuki houses was stated not just by Kukis but also by others, a former IFS Officer (NmMD19 – page 155).

Similarly, a senior Assam Rifles official in Imphal told the Tribunal that, “In villages, you often know which house belongs to the Meitei and which belongs to a Kuki but the same is not known in the cities. However, in Imphal all Kuki houses were marked from before the conflict which made them easily identifiable. So, the Meiteis were prepared and better organised initially. Later, however, the Kukis organised themselves and were much better prepared than the Meiteis, and they were equally brutal in their treatment of the Meiteis”. (Witness number IGD13 at page 178).

The full chapter should be read to get a better understanding of the flow of incidents as traced from the testimonies. We would like to reiterate; the aim of the entire exercise is not to blame or finger-point any particular community - Meitei or Kuki – but to reconstruct the variety of methods used by different groups to spread hateful rhetoric and divisive discourse and create a setting for outbreak of violence at an opportune moment. We have reiterated several times, that it is important that the deeply polarised communities should start the process of building peace and reconciliation which however requires truth, justice and accountability to be addressed as a pre-condition.

Eruption of violence on 3rd May, 2023.

Chapter 4.4, *‘Beginning of violence from May 3’* traces the flow of events on 3rd May, 2023. (pages 158 – 177).

It should be pointed out that all the different tribal groups in Manipur had given a call for demonstrations and processions on 3rd May, 2023 to mark their opposition to the demand of Meiteis for ST status, across all the tribal districts of the state. Reportedly, by and large the rallies and demonstrations across all the districts ended without disturbance barring in Churachandpur, a majorly Kuki concentrated district. It should be pointed out that ATSUM which had given the call for the one-day protest demonstration had not given a call for a blockade or bandh on 3rd May, 2023.

‘Counter-blockade’ call by Meitei Leepun on 2nd May, 2023

It is interesting to note that on 2nd May, 2023, at about 600 pm, the Meitei Leepun had issued a social media message calling upon Meitei groups to enforce a counter-blockade starting from 2nd May night, within and outside Manipur. (see page,160 for the FB message).

Reconstructing the events on 3rd May, 2023

It is in this surcharged situation marked by hostility, increased sense of divisiveness due to hate politics and propaganda that we need to situate what occurred in Churachandpur on 3rd May, 2023. As the Report points out that there were a number of signs of impending conflict and that the violence was neither spontaneous or an abrupt event or a conflict taking place in isolation. (Page 158).

The starting point of violence on 3rd May is clearly spelt out in pages 158-59.

“The first set of events of violence were traced to the border between Churachandpur and Bishnupur districts, denoted by the red square in the map

on top. The map on the right zooms in for a closer look to the coordinates of the Anglo-Kuki War Centenary Gate (24°24'15.4" N, 93°42'27.2" E) and the nearby towns and villages, Kangvai and Torbung where the first instances of violence were reported."

While it is important to track how the violence started, it is equally important to understand the buildup of tension and situation. On page 160 of chapter 4.4 testimony has been quoted:

"An ex-IPS officer who met the Tribunal said that the chief of Arambai Tenggol foolishly admitted to the media that he was in Churachandpur. She also shared that the BJYM president Barish Sharma also had made it public that he was in Churachandpur. A Meitei journalist who met the Tribunal shared that Meitei Leepun's Chief, Pramot Singh said on record that they were prepared for an attack in Churachandpur before the conflict started. Meitei Leepun people were present near the police forces in Churachandpur."

A senior Assam Rifles officer in Churachandpur pointed out,

"While tensions were in the air on the 3rd of May, what really triggered the violence was the act of piling tires and setting them on fire near the base of the Kuki Centenary Gate. **This was a premeditated attack.** Within moments rumours started spreading that the gate was being burnt down by Meiteis and a huge Kuki mob started gathering in Churachandpur, armed with guns. After that the violence really broke out in the area". The same officer said, "No one really investigated the burning of the Gate, which began the entire conflict. It was shoved under the rug". (Testimony of CCPurGD2 at page 162-63).

Other testimonies, including from a Bihari trader in Churachandpur reported that he had personally participated in the 3rd May rally which ended peacefully at the DCs office after which he returned home. He later heard about the incident of setting fire to the Anglo Kuki gate. Very poignantly, the witness points out that if the government wanted to curtail violence, they need to have promulgated curfew under sec. 144 to prevent spread of panic. As he testified, "Instead they (meaning the government) encouraged the violence". (page 163-64).

Meitei survivors in Kangvai testified that violence against their homes began at 230 pm after the rally concluded. (page 168). Similarly, 12 Meitei survivors from Phougakchao Ikhai village also narrated their harrowing experiences of Kuki mob violence in the afternoon of 3rd May, 2023.

The testimonies of Kuki survivors living in various localities in Imphal also reveals that they were subject to Meitei mob violence from the afternoon of 3rd May, 2023. For example, a 63-year-old Kuki survivor, KMS15, living in East Imphal, testified that by the afternoon of 3rd May, he received warning over social media and "soon big armed mobs of Meiteis started attacking our areas. In the evening, I was hiding in the neighbours house when one Muslim family saved us". (page 173-176).

In Chapter 10 titled 'Justice and Accountability', the Report points out that in mainstream media discourse and popular narratives, the specific incident that sparked the recent violence is ascribed to events that occurred on 3rd May, 2023 in Churachandpur district during a tribal solidarity march organised by the All Tribal Students' Union of Manipur (ATSUM) to protest the order of the Manipur HC directing the Manipur government to include the Meiteis in the list of STs. While certainly there were clashes between Kuki and Meitei groups in Churachandpur, two important aspects need to be pointed out:

- (a) firstly, the clashes broke out about one to two hours after the rally participants had dispersed after the protest march ended peacefully in Churachandpur and occurred after rumours spread that Meitei groups had burnt the Anglo-Kuki Centenary Gate at Leisang.
- (b) secondly, the protest rallies were organised by all the different tribal communities – Nagas, Kuki-Zo, Hmar and other smaller tribal communities - across all the tribal districts of Manipur and all of them ended peacefully barring in Churachandpur.

Very importantly the Report also points out that "It is equally clear that the State and the majority Meitei groups like Arambai Tenggol and Meitei Leepun used the context arising from the announced protests of tribal communities on 3rd May, 2023 as an occasion to launch concerted violence against the Kukis". (Ch. 10.1.1 at page 522).

It is important to point out that the Report at no place seeks to condone violence and harm inflicted on any person of any community or their properties. Anyone in breach of the law should be prosecuted through the process known to law, irrespective of whether they belong to the majority or minority community. By the same token, it is important to acknowledge the fact that certain non-state players with the tacit and open support of the state and the police have played a key role in the planning and outburst of violence. As the Report consistently points out, the violence cannot be seen as a spontaneous outburst or isolated event. It was the culmination of a long process of deliberately stoking hate politics inciting violence against the 'other' by political groups of the Meitei community, led by no less than the former CM himself.

What became clear to the Tribunal from the various testimonies of survivors, victims and officials is that the occasion of the demonstration and protest announced on 3rd May, 2023 was used by different groups to further their own ends. To quote the senior Assam Rifles officer who spoke to the Tribunal in Imphal "So, the Meiteis were prepared and better organised initially. Later, however, the Kukis organised themselves and were much better prepared than the Meiteis, and they were equally brutal in their treatment of the Meiteis". (IGD13, page 178).

A similar view was articulated by an artist and youth activist, who met the Tribunal in Imphal and pointed out, "*It is difficult to say what is the truth now*. We know that Arambai and Meitei Leepun were already present in Kuki areas Tensions were brewing since 27th April when the Forest Office in Churachandpur was burnt down by Kukis. The government didn't do anything to stop what was already on the boil ...

The ATSUM rally was supposed to be from different communities. It was held in different districts but violence broke out in Churachandpur. Many people question why the violence erupted only in Churachandpur. But it started also in Moreh. Nothing happened in Naga dominated areas. Only in Kuki dominated areas. The rally was called by ATSUM – both Nagas and Kuki, but many people assume the Kukis instigated “. (IGD10, page 163, emphasis given).

It is important here to point out that given the complex nature of events, the prior history and the buildup of hate politics and animosity in the weeks and months prior to 3rd May, 2023, the situation was like a tinder box waiting to explode. The Report points out, “It is equally clear that the State and the majority Meitei groups like the Arambai Tenggol and Meitei Leepun used the context arising from the announced protests of tribal communities on 3rd May, 2023 as an occasion to launch concerted violence against the Kukis”. (page 522).

To sum up, none of the depositions have been ignored to arrive at any contradictory conclusion.

Gaps in the description of events in Chapter 4 and the Executive Summary

As can be seen, Chapter 4, which is 135 pages long, traces the events of violence in a detailed manner, based on the testimonies of victims and survivors, official documents, statements and reports presented to the Tribunal, media reports and other relevant material. Despite this, there are some incorrect representation of the detailed report in the Executive Summary as follows:

Page 20:

“A peaceful protest march organized by the All Tribal Students’ Union of Manipur (ATSUM) in Churachandpur turned into a flashpoint:

- *Meant to oppose the High Court’s ST order, the rally drew thousands from hill communities.*
- *Violent counter-mobilization erupted, especially in the valley, where armed Meitei youth groups began targeting Kuki homes and churches.*

Within hours, the state plunged into communal violence:

- *Mobs rampaged through Kuki settlements in Imphal and nearby areas.*
- *In Churachandpur and Kangpokpi, retaliatory violence emerged against Meitei homes and properties”.*

Page 22:

“The violence led to the forced displacement of over 60,000 people:

- *Kuki-Zo communities were driven out of the valley.*
- *Meitei communities left tribal-dominated hill areas”.*

The specific terms which readers have found objectionable are underlined in the content of the ES reproduced above.

We recognise that the portions of the ES highlighted above and the use of the specific terms do not accurately represent what has been described at great length throughout Chapter 4. We also understand that the above extracts can lead to inaccurate understandings and conclusions about the violence that occurred in

Manipur.

We sincerely apologize for the misleading and contradictory account in the Executive Summary, and regret if the descriptions above have hurt sentiments or caused emotional distress to any reader. We shall make appropriate changes to the ES in future editions of the Report.

5. Fails to dispel rumours of burning of the illegal structure, so-called ‘Anglo Kuki War Memorial Gate’, to attack Meitei

It is clear that the framing of the point indicates bias and preconceived ideas as reference is made to the Anglo Kuki War Memorial Gate as “illegal” and “so-called”. Reports of the alleged incident at the Anglo-Kuki War Memorial Gate are also sought to be dismissed as “rumours”. This issue is dealt with in Chapter 4.4.1, between pages 159 to 165.

This gate is called the ‘**Anglo Kuki War Memorial Gate**’, and is on National Highway 2, in Leisang village, Churachandpur district. The Anglo Kuki War Centenary Gate was inaugurated in 2019 to commemorate the 1917-19 war fought by Kukis against the British.

It is important to point out that the Report presents, not rumours, but information gained through testimonies, especially of security officials.

The report at pages 160-161 of Chapter 4.4, points out to the presence of the head of Meitei Leepun and Arambai Tenggol on 2nd and 3rd May 2023 in Churachandpur. It will be relevant to reiterate at this point what a senior officer of the Assam Rifles in Churachandpur, CCPurGD2, told:

“While tensions were in the air on the 3rd of May, what really triggered the violence was the act of *piling tires and setting them on fire near the base of the Kuki Centenary Gate*. This was a premeditated attack. Within moments rumours started spreading that the gate was being burnt down by Meiteis, and a huge Kuki mob started gathering in Churachandpur, armed with guns. After that the violence really broke out in the area. **No one really investigated the burning of the Gate, which began the entire conflict. It was shoved under the rug**”. (page 162 of Chapter 4.4.1, emphasis added).

We have previously referred to the statement of a former senior police officer who told the Tribunal that the “Chief of Arambai Tenggol foolishly admitted to the media that he was in Churachandpur”. Apart from this, the Report also points out to the presence of BJYM President Barish Sharma in Churachandpur on 3rd May, 2023. A Meitei journalist also informed the Tribunal that Meitei Leepun’s chief, Pramot Singh said on record that they were prepared for an attack on Churachandpur before the conflict started. Meitei Leepun people were present near the police forces in Churachandpur. (page 160-161).

All the testimonies and documents gathered by the Tribunal clearly point out to

the fact that there was a pre-meditated plan to stir up trouble in Churachandpur by attempting to set fire to the Anglo-Kuki War Centenary Gate at Leisang, knowing fully well the type of backlash this will entail from the Kukis for whom “the commemoration served not only as a remembrance of past struggle but also as a beacon of hope for future generations”. (page 159, quoting from an article in the Hills Journal).

6. Silence and cover-up of Kuki Militants and their related information:

The report does not go into historical roles of various militant groups (**either Kuki or Meitei**) but has recorded information related to militant groups, irrespective of community, only in the context of the current conflict.

Historically, the existence of Kuki militants is acknowledged by the Indian State. The first Suspension of Operations (SOO) agreement was signed by the Centre and Manipur Government in August 2008.

The report also does not cover any information on Meitei radical or armed groups listed below:

Peoples’ Liberation Army generally known as PLA, and its political wing, the Revolutionary Peoples’ Front (RPF), the United National Liberation Front (UNLF) and its armed wing, the Manipur Peoples’ Army (MPA), the Peoples’ Revolutionary Party of Kangleipak (PREPAK) and its armed wing, the ‘Red Army’, the Kangleipak Communist Party (KCP) and its armed wing, also called the ‘Red Army’, the Kanglei Yaol Kanba Lup (KYKL), the Coordination Committee (CorCom) and the Alliance for Socialist Unity Kangleipak (ASUK), which are banned by the Union Ministry of Home affairs.

As pointed earlier, the report relies on the testimonies given before the Tribunal. In the section titled, ‘Economic blockades and restrictions/ regulation of movement’, the report states:

“One of the most devastating impacts of the conflict is the complete segregation of Meitei and Kuki areas, divided by ‘buffer zones’ manned by security forces as well as **militants from Meitei and Kuki militant outfits**. This segregation has led to the displacement of around 60,000 people, most of whom continue to languish in relief camps. This has also led to the imposition of blockades by militant groups from both communities, policing and restricting movements between the two areas.”. (page 225, Chapter 4.7)

On page 110 the report notes the contradictory moves by the State and Central Government about the SoO agreement. On 10th March 2023 the State Government withdrew from tripartite talks or SoO (Suspension of Operation) Agreements with three hill-based insurgent groups which was announced through an official Press Note (see FN 33, pg. 109). The withdrawal occurred when the Central Government, only ten days previously had extended the SoO agreement with Kuki militants in New Delhi. (see FN 34, page 110).

As far as Meitei Leepun (ML) and Arambai Tenggol (AT) are concerned, Chapter 6.6 reports on the emergence of these two new militias. On page 340-343 the report provides various facts and testimonies related to their connections with the ruling party, including the FIR filed by the Porompat Police Station under section 25(1-A) of Arms Act and the oath taking ceremony at Kangla Fort on 24th January 2024, which has been extensively reported.¹⁰

The Report points out “The role played by armed militias in the Manipur conflict is glaring. Two relatively new militant groups which stand in the eye of the tornado – **with numerous allegations against them including active participation in the conflict to looting of arms from state armouries – are Arambai Tenggol (AT) and Meitei Leepun (ML).** Both these organisations, which are engaged in the Sanamahis revivalist movement, have close connections to Hindu right-wing organisations such as the BJP and the RSS. Arambai Tenggol was founded by the titular Meitei king of Manipur, Shri. Leishemba Sanajaoba, who is also the Rajya Sabha member from the BJP. Sanajaoba also remains the Chairman of Arambai Tenggol till this date and a video posted by Sanajaoba captured the oath taking ceremony of Arambai Tenggol being conducted at his residence”.¹¹ (page 340).

Apart from Shri. Sanajaoba, Arambai Tenggol also enjoys the patronage of the former BJP Chief Minister Shri Biren Singh who has photographs with the members of the organisation which were posted by the organisation on their Facebook page¹².

On the other hand, Pramot Singh who is the leader of Meitei Leepun, was a member of Akhil Bharatiya Vidyarthi Parishad, the student’s wing of Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh which is the parent organisation of BJP.” (page 341).

It is useful to refer to Chapter 1.4: ‘*Search for the Truth: Going beyond the mainstream narrative*’ which points out to several concerns one of them being:

“What is the veracity of the allegation that the two non-State actor armed groups – the Arambai Tenggol and Meitei Leepun –were formed, supported and/ or patronised by then Chief Minister, Biren Singh? And that, therefore they were found standing next to the State police in Churachandpur? And that, the police were directed to be indifferent to the looting of arms from the State armoury, and the State allowed the violence to go unabated by fanning the insecurities of the majority community?” (page 55)

There have been very many testimonies directly describing the involvement of these two militant groups, in the current violence and hence there have been multiple references made to them.

On page 343, the report gives one more testimony. For example, NmMD24, a

¹⁰ <https://www.deccanherald.com/india/manipur/manipur-meitei-radical-group-administers-oath-to-mps-mlas-kuki-legislators-look-for-arms-in-the-valley-2863186>

¹¹ <https://www.facebook.com/HHSanajaoba.Leishemba/videos/430995689136627/>

¹² <https://www.itlmediacell.com/the-rise-of-arambai-tenggol/> (We can take the relevant pictures from the article since the article is by ITLF)

researcher and writer whose expertise lies in the topics of Northeast India, Myanmar and armed conflicts, deposed before the Tribunal that,

“Incontrovertible evidence to prove that there is a connection between the state govt and the AT. The CM gave a speech on AT about why they are holding onto their arms. He said they are doing it for defence, till the other side is disarmed. This is rationalization of the existence of AT and justification of their armed status. This reaffirms the belief that there is a relation between the Meitei political elite and the AT”. (pages 342-43)

NmMD24 made the above observation in the context of several cases of robberies in state armouries allegedly carried out by the Arambai Tenggol and Meitei Leepun. In one suo moto FIR filed by the Porompat Police Station under section 25(1-A) of Arms Act, Barish Sharma, the former President of BJYM, was reported as concealing illegal arms and ammunitions and the following weapons were recovered from his possession at his house:

- i. One Glock 17 gun along with a magazine bearing no. LDK328
- ii. One Glock gun along with a magazine bearing no. SNM885
- iii. One Glock empty magazine
- iv. One Steyr Mannlicher Pistol along with a magazine

However, Sharma was released on bail merely a week after his arrest¹³. (page 343).

The Inspector General of Assam Rifles / Major General, when speaking with the members of the IPT pointed out that about 6000 – 7000 weapons, mostly automatic weapons, had been looted by Arambai Tenggol and Meitei Leepun from the police armoury and that investigation and rule of law must prevail. Very poignantly he pointed out, “De-weaponisation is required to remove romanticisation of war”. (ref.: pg. 344).

None of the testimonies or government record show involvement of Mr. Thanglianpau Guite, Mr. S.S. Haokip or other Kuki politicians with the current violence and hence it has not been covered in the report.

7. Ignores foreign terrorists and radical religious leaders’ connection with Kuki Groups

The tribunal has relied on the information presented to tribunal as below, and the role of RSS has come through the testimonies given before the tribunal.

To illustrate, the testimony of KFD6, a woman from the Paitei community, who is also a high-ranking government officer, told the Tribunal of having visited the International University of Manipur which was run by the chairman of RSS. She is quoted in the Report to say, “The RSS has entered Imphal - I have visited the camp in Pangei there in 2022. Surprised to see young boys undergoing training for 3 months, 6 months there. People who ran the camps were from Karnataka.... There were training for women as well. Only Meitei were participating, not the tribals”. (page 274, Chapter 5.10.1).

¹³<https://imphaleast.dcourts.gov.in/case-status-search-by-petitioner-respondent/>; Cross reference to chapter 10 of this report.

On page 341 it is reported that: Pramot Singh who is the leader of Meitei Leepun, was a member of Akhil Bharatiya Vidyarthi Parishad, the student's wing of Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh which is the parent organisation of BJP.

Very clearly the testimonies of different people who deposed before the IPT spoke about the close links between the emergence of the two groups, AT and ML with both the then Chief Minister as also the ruling BJP party and RSS. It was based on the testimonies and information collected that the Tribunal in its report points out to the instances of impunity enjoyed by these militias and how the state has deliberately turned a blind eye to the complaints raised against these actors. The Report also points out that human rights activists, lawyers, journalists have repeatedly raised alarm about the conduct of these two organizations however no significant progress has been made towards justice and accountability. Police officials in the Valley refuse to cooperate to bring these militant outfits to justice. The Report also points out to the failure of the NHRC to adequately and appropriately address the grave situation caused by these groups. (pages 343-44).¹⁴

The links: <https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/india/manipur-tribal-outfit-member-at-surrey-gurdwara-raises-red-flags/articleshow/103998613.cms> and <https://www.indiatoday.in/india/story/us-man-gifted-drone-manipur-ultras-foreign-agent-trouble-making-evangelist-2653078-2024-12-20> pointed out in the rebuttal, do not show any connection between the reports from Canada/ America and the current conflict.

8. Selective targeting of Meitei Groups

The information provided on various organizations in the report including Meira Paibi, is based on the testimonies before the tribunal, including testimonies of Meira Paibi. (pages 274 – 278, Chapter 5.10.2). As regards the other issues raised in this section the following may be noted.

- a. The link provided is being misrepresented. As the Deccan Herald reported: The Supreme Court was requested to ensure that the bodies are buried with dignity as per customary or religious practices and DNA samples of bodies should be stored as evidence in the criminal trials. It was not the case of anyone or organization threatening families and preventing them from claiming the bodies of deceased loved ones
- b. The NIA arrests of members of Kuki Inpi Tengenoupal (KIT)¹⁵ occurred in **June 2025**, much AFTER the tribunal hearing concluded and therefore there could be no testimony against them brought before the tribunal.
- c. The News18 reported the use of the ambulance on 6th September 2024, for incident of 1st September, and was not brought before the tribunal.

¹⁴ THIS FN is not for this response but about future edits to the IPT Report: Note the quote in page 345 “Despite a plethora of evidence of AT leading role ...” is from this URL - <https://www.itlmediacell.com/the-rise-of-arambai-tenggol/> this has been clubbed along with the India Today article in FN 239 and should be de-linked.

¹⁵ <https://www.newsonair.gov.in/nia-arrests-three-insurgents-in-deadly-manipur-attack-case/>, report dated 8th June, 2025.

There was no deliberate attempt in the report to target any specific community.

9. Biased and one-sided reportage of atrocities and violence

About both incidents referred to here, the response is as below:

- The massacre in Jiribam occurred in November 2024, after the tribunal hearings were completed, and hence could not be made part of the report.

A Note: At this juncture we should state that although there were requests to PUCL made by Meitei and Kuki contacts to investigate the Jiribam incidents, since the IPT testimony process had concluded and the Jury members were engaged with analysis of the information and material gathered as part of the report writing process these incidents could not be separately studied. So until the IPT concluded the task for which it was set up and released the final report, PUCL could not independently undertake a separate fact-finding mission into Jiribam. We however acknowledge and recognise that the scale and brutality of the Jiribam massacre and incidents that followed are shocking and require an independent citizen's fact-finding enquiry into the incidents.

- As far as the two Meitei students who went missing, the report on page 503 gives details of testimony of the father, including the information that though six persons were arrested by NIA, the bodies remain unrecovered. The father's testimony is reported, "We know they were abducted by the Kukis and killed. My wife is totally devastated and inconsolable. We want the bodies of our son and the girl. We want justice and closure". (ref.: page 504).
- The testimony and incident is also referred to on page no 241.

10. Dismisses concerns of illegal immigration

The NDTV report was published in December 2024, it also reports that Mizoram has taken over 40,000 Myanmar refugees. This indicates that Manipur government could have taken similar humanitarian approach, instead of terming the refugees as illegal migrants.

The Business Standard report of July 2023 refers to Chandel district, (not impacted by current violence), where once again Manipur Government refers to Myanmar refugees as illegal migrants.

Apart from this, the report points out facts which give details about illegal immigration.

About illegal migrants: Please refer to the explanations from the report which is included in the first query about "Misrepresentation of data"

11. Camouflages the first rape in the crisis that of a Meitei woman, among rumour

The Tribunal met the sexual assault survivor from Meitei community, and it has been recorded in section 5.4.4, page 253.

The Report also points out that as regards the sexual assault survivor belonging to the Meitei community, even though the assault occurred on 3rd May, 2023 she went to the JNIMS hospital only on 8th August, 2023 after which the FIR was registered on 9th August, 2023.

We have not given details of FIRs of sexual assault as it is not a public document, it is also out of respect for the survivors, who are thus forced to relive the harrowing experience.

At page 504 of the report (Chapter 9.5.2) detailed testimony of the survivor of sexual assault from Meitei community is provided. In the end she describes that "On 8th August 2023, I finally went to JNIMS hospital. It was only after that visit that FIR was filed on 9th August 2023. A year later, I still get nightmares, I tremble and faint on hearing loud noises and scary images flash before me. I don't go out of my house."

No sexual assault can be justified, even in retaliation; it certainly does not provide any justification for any further sexual assault on other community women.

In fact, historically, in any mass violence and wars, women from the 'other' community or nation, are subjected to sexual assault. (There is no community historically or otherwise, where women do not get sexually assaulted in times of mass crime or wars). Women are treated as "honour" or property of community; in order to dishonour the 'other', they are sexually assaulted, not just injured. So many a times the fear of being "dishonoured" within the community itself forces women into silence.

It needs to be noted that Manipur, like any other place on earth is no stranger to violence suffered by women, irrespective of the community they belong to (not uncharacteristic of the Meitei community), even in non-conflict times. In fact, in section 5.2.3 we have given data from National Family Health Survey (NFHS-5), 2019-21, which states that "Over two-fifths (44%) of ever-married (Married/Divorced/Widowed) women aged 18-49 in Manipur have experienced physical or sexual violence."

12. Biased gender-based violence:

The gender-based violence section of the report is neither biased nor distorted. The details below speak for the same.

- Jiribam violence erupted in November 2024, after the tribunal's sitting and hence has not been covered in the report.
- The report as stated above in chapter 5.4.4 and on page 504 of chapter 9.5.2 gives details of the testimony of the survivor of sexual assault from the Meitei community.
- The report also notes that there are many unreported cases. On page 255, chapter 5.4.6 it reports on discussion with some leaders of Meira Paibi in Imphal:
 "We met with 10-12 rape survivors, but only one of them came out. Others want to hide because of fear. Nursing students in Churachandpur complained about sexual violence. In a relief camp in Mekhola, women submitted a

Statement without hesitation. Though we have met them, we don't want to say more."

- On same page 255, in Bishnupur Relief camp BPurGD3, a volunteer/coordinator at the relief is quoted as "Meitei in the border or interim areas could not survive the attack by the Kuki till the Army arrived. There are also plenty of cases of Meitei women being raped, but they do not want to come out and confess because of the stigma."

In section 5.4.5 we have stated that: In the current conflict there is a strong possibility of many sexual assaults being not reported by women from both communities. It is observed that the cases which were reported were either due to social media exposure long after the incident, or where the victims had perished or so severely injured that they had been admitted to hospitals.

13. Misleading claims about house surveys:

It is true that the tribunal was not aware of the survey conducted by IMC in June 2021. But it might be equally true that such survey did help in identifying the Kuki household in the Imphal valley. The people who testified before tribunal expressed this fear, which has been noted in the report. We have already reported in an earlier query, how people gave testimonies about Kuki houses in Imphal valley being marked and subsequently targetted at the time of the outbreak of violence. This fact has also been attested to by Assam Rifles officer who spoke to the Tribunal and has been referred to earlier in this Reply Note.

14. Legal and judicial issues:

None of the sub-judice issues are claimed to be resolved by the report. As regards the issue of who started the crisis, to repeat what we have previously pointed out in this same Reply,

"The first set of events of violence were traced to the border between Churachandpur and Bishnupur districts, and the nearby towns and villages, Kangvai and Torbung where the first instances of violence were reported." (page 159, Chapter 4.4).

However, "how and where the violence began, which group instigated it, has been an extremely contentious question. It has been difficult for any non-partisan report and even experts who testified to the Tribunal, to ascertain the accurate chain of events."

To reiterate what we have stated earlier, the exercise leading to the Report of the IPT was to uncover the sequence of incidents and events leading to the outbreak of violence on 3rd May, 2023 and the role of various players, as spoken to by survivors and victims from all communities, officials and security agencies, local activists, media professionals and others who had knowledge about events.

It is important at this juncture to make a distinction between reference to 'Meiteis' as members of the Meitei community and 'Meitei organizations' as specific

organizations made up of Meitei community members. The Report has at all points been conscious of the importance of not conflating the two categories: thus, when the Report highlights Meitei organizations like the Arambai Tenggol and Meitei Leepun, it refers to members of these organizations who were Meitei by origin. The available testimonies and media reports all consistently point out to the involvement of both these organizations as playing a crucial role in fanning divisiveness and hate propaganda against the Kukis in the weeks and months before the outbreak of violence on 3rd May, 2023. By no stretch of imagination, do we say that all members of the Meitei community, as a whole, are sectarian or believe in divisive politics. We firmly believe that the larger community of Meiteis are peace loving, believe in social harmony and want to see violence-free Manipur. The same distinction is true of other ethnic communities also.

As regards the FIRs filed and the registration of Zero FIRs, the fact remains that the investigation into the bulk of the 6500 FIRs referred still remains incomplete and it is not at all clear when the police will file charge sheets and trials begin. Many victims testified that oftentimes FIRs were registered after a delay of many months and that the FIRs when registered, did not reflect their actual complaints. Many times, the FIRs were hurriedly prepared by the police who were forced to register complaints. Eye witnesses and injured persons still remain to be examined and their testimonies recorded. As commented earlier, the geographical division of the state into exclusive Meitei or Kuki only areas prevents people from accessing the criminal justice system.

The Report in Chapter 10, '*Justice and Accountability*' between pages 521 to 613 elaborates on the issue of shortcomings and challenges in the judicial accountability process. At the end of a long discussion on a variety of issues underlying the justice process, the Report very starkly points out, "While infiltration and cross-border dynamics are undoubtedly factors, the conflict in Manipur is also driven by internal issues, including ethnic tensions, economic disparities and political marginalisation. External influences exacerbate these internal challenges, but are not the sole cause". (page 611).

The situation has not changed much even after 8 months since Manipur was placed under President's Rule in February, 2025 and the announcement of peace talks in April, 2025. As the Report points out in the 'Epilogue Section', "Ultimately, there is a widespread perception that the peace process is not real, that it is a spectacle, staged from time to time, but not rooted in political will or community consent. The budget for peace is shrinking, the state deficit is growing ... What is absent is what people crave the most: a process of truth, justice and healing – the will to face the pain honestly, the courage to meet across the lines, the humility to accept that both sides have suffered and that peace, if it to last must be just, inclusive and real". (pages 691-92).

15. Silence on banks looted in hill districts

The banks were looted in December 2023 and later in October 2024, the tribunal had completed its hearing by then and hence it could not be covered by the report.

16. Exonerates National Media of their biased reportage targeting Meiteis

In keeping with the objectives of the Independent People's Tribunal on Manipur of documenting the violations suffered by the people of Manipur, examining and analysing the performance of responsibilities of the constitutional authorities, security agencies and government functionaries and existing documentation on the Manipur situation, the Tribunal members decided to meet with local journalists, media professionals and others conversant with and have written about the conflict in Manipur. (see page 44 and Chapter 7, pp. 350 to 366).

The Report points out that "Manipur violence is amongst the first episodes of mass violence in India where the entire outbreak of violence can be directly traced to how incidents and events were covered by the media – both by mainstream and the social media" (page 350).

It is important to note the testimonies and comments that are documented in the report.

On page 348 of Chapter 7, the report makes clear that "Media plays a crucial role during any violence. Often as a mitigating force, spreading awareness and safeguarding bystanders from the violence. But more often than not, as an agent of aggravation and escalation, spreading misinformation and stoking bystanders into participating in the violence."

The Report significantly points out that though historically the development of media was slow in Manipur, there has been a significant increase in recent years, particularly in digital media and social media. This is reflected in the growing popularity of YouTube news channels whose subscription numbers indicate high engagement of Manipuris with the news. Significantly, the Report also highlights that "it appears that the Imphal valley is much more developed and there are many more daily newspapers, television channels and digital platforms in Imphal than in the rest of the state". (ref. pg. 357). The Report lists the number of print media, YouTube channels and Social Media platforms located within Manipur and the list of journalists from in and outside Manipur who have been writing on the Manipur conflict. (pages 357 – 359).

The report relies on testimonies given by the local journalists from the local newspapers and media outlets. Print Media, Local YouTube Channels, social media and journalists in and outside Manipur, Members of Parliament and politicians, and activists and others were heard. The report of the Editors Guild as also reports of other bodies were used as references. While on the subject of the Editors Guild Report, the Reports states, "Some of the journalists who deposed seemed to indicate that the findings of the armed forces as represented in their letter and of the EGI were broadly true. Meaning that there was a certain consensus in the media about being partisan, and about how to report stories where there was an interest involved, whether to linked to the government or community". (page 362).

On page 366 the report highlights a common phrase heard from most media

professionals: “If the state government wanted, they could have easily controlled the violent outbreak within 3 days or a week at the maximum, after 3rd May 2023. But they didn’t. Why? Who stands to gain?”.

These experienced journalists who have covered and witnessed many conflict situations in the last 30 years and more, were unequivocal about the fact that the entire ethnic conflict that has engulfed Manipur since 3rd May, 2023, was not spontaneous or organic, but reflected the results of deliberate stoking of fear, anger, hostility and sense of revenge or retribution and a planned outbreak of violence. A common refrain from many of them is worth repeating: “The clue to understanding the current conflict lies in asking the hard questions: ‘Who gains by allowing the conflict to keep festering? Who benefits by the non-resolution of the conflict? What is the advantage by forcing tens of thousands of Manipuris from various sides to live in IDP camps? What does the Central Government gain by allowing the present leadership (under Biren Singh) to continue and not seriously do anything to stop the conflict? The answers to these questions will provide the clue to understanding the present conflict.” (page 366).

The key role that the media can play in bringing about truth, justice and reconciliation was briefly revealed in the incident of 2 Air Hostesses of Manipur, one Meitei and another Kuki, who died in the tragic Air India crash in Ahmedabad on 12th June, 2025. The Report highlights, “Shared grief surfaced at the tragic deaths of two young Manipuri air hostesses. A senior journalist noted that when the news broke, the state mourned both as Manipuris, not divided by community. There was even a gesture from the Meitei leadership urging that the Kuki family bring their daughter’s body back to Imphal. But fear won out. Instead, the family chose to travel from Ahmedabad to Dimapur, and from there to their current shelter in Kangpokpi. Their home in Imphal, once in the heart of Lambulane, remains abandoned. This, according to the journalist, is the tragedy of Manipur: brief glimpses of unity, followed by reversion to division. Unless both communities can move past victim and perpetrator roles, unless they meet in truth and reconciliation, the status quo will persist”. (page 691).

To reiterate, the IPT was set up to bring the facts underlying the Manipur conflict and the role of various players from the initial incident of 3rd May, 2023 till October, 2024, when the Tribunal heard the last of the testimonies (heard virtually) so as to come up with recommendations to repair the torn social, cultural and political fabric of the state, a task which was carried out to the best of their abilities.

To Sum-up

In the Epilogue portion of the Report (pages 686 to 692), it is pointed out that there is a widespread perception that the peace process is not real, that it is a spectacle, staged from time to time, but not rooted in political will or community consent. The budget for peace is shrinking, the state deficit is growing, and the cost of continued displacement and broken systems is now being borne by the people. What is absent is what people crave the most: a process of truth, justice, and healing – the will to face the pain honestly, the courage to meet across the lines, the humility to accept that both sides have suffered, and that peace, if it is to last, must be just, inclusive, and real.

What is really needed is a Truth and Reconciliation project to bring both sides together. The victim-perpetrator mindset needs to be put behind. For the ethnic groups to move back to their homes a process must be undertaken which builds confidence through cultural and social integration, through truth and reconciliation and government financed rebuilding of homes. (pages 691-92).

It is this task that the Report points out that needs to be urgently addressed. The media, civil society groups, human rights and women's organizations and concerned citizens all have a crucial role to play in this vital task.

The concluding paras of the Report symbolises the approach of the Tribunal to build peace, justice, accountability and reconciliation in Manipur: *"What is very clearly needed is a process of comprehensive disarmament. Transitional justice, a holistic blend of security, justice, autonomy, and development—together with continued, mediated dialogue—provides the best chance for a stable, united future in Manipur."*

As far as political restructuring for autonomy maybe concerned or land and citizenship reforms, these must be put on the back burner".

Accountability and justice is foundational to rebuilding the trust, democracy and coexistence in Manipur

At the time of the release of the IPT Report on 20th August, 2025, Justice Kurian Joseph and Justice Anjana Prakash on behalf of other jury members of the IPT called upon India's Judiciary, Parliament and civil society to reclaim their duty to ensure accountability and justice so that Manipur does not become a template for future impunity. They pointed out, "Towards this, access to justice needs to be ensured for all and a permanent bench of the Manipur High Court needs to be established in the hill region. A Special Investigating Team (SIT) needs to be set up to conduct independent investigation of the thousands of cases arising from the conflict and to enquire into the role of the armed forces, security officers and police. The hate propaganda and inflammatory speeches that led to incitement and escalation of violence need to be prosecuted along with action against the authorities who failed to exercise their powers to prevent it. Meanwhile, a restorative justice framework is essential for addressing grievances and promoting healing, that is hinged on acknowledging harm, reparations, and reintegration over mere punishment. The Report emphasises that lasting peace in Manipur requires structural changes, community dialogue, legal accountability and sustained moral leadership".

We should reiterate that neither the Independent People's Tribunal, (all the 14 jury members are highly respected professionals, who are independent of PUCL) nor PUCL, had or have the intention of dividing communities in Manipur in any way or to thwart, put hurdles and prevent the peace process in Manipur or to paint one community as a victims and another as perpetrator or to keep the hatred and cycle of violence to keep simmering without resolution.

We, in the PUCL, remain committed to the process of truth, accountability and justice as a means to helping build durable peace and reconciliation in Manipur.

As explained before, we are always open to criticism and dialogue. We are ready to consider any comment or feedback made about any section of the Report but request that specific portions be highlighted with supporting material to show why a review is required. Our commitment is for the truth to be uncovered and prevail, however difficult it is, as only through truthful recounting of facts and events can justice and peace prevail and the process of reconciliation begin.



Kavita Srivastava, President



Dr. V. Suresh, General Secretary

People's Union for Civil Liberties (PUCL)