

## AIR Spotlight: Restoration of Peace and Normalcy in Manipur

AIR Spotlight is an insightful program featured daily on the All India Radio News on air. In this program, many eminent panellists discuss issues of importance which can be quite helpful in [IAS exam](#) preparation.

This article is about the discussion on: ‘**Restoration of Peace and Normalcy in Manipur**’.

### Participants:

- Deepak Deewan: Political Analyst
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**Context** - Violent clashes broke out in the northeastern state of Manipur after a tribal solidarity march was organised in the ten hill districts on 3rd May to protest against the numerically dominant Meitei community’s demand for Scheduled Tribe (ST) status. The violence spread like wildfire and engulfed the whole state. The clashes were preceded by tension over the eviction of Kuki villagers from reserve forest land, which had led to a series of smaller agitations.

### Situation in Manipur

The situation in Manipur which witnessed violence and ethnic clashes has reached an alarming proportion but with the deployment of the army and central police force, the situation has been brought under some control. The violence broke out between the Imphal Valley-based Meiteis and the hill-based Kukis. The efforts are on to attain absolute normalcy in the state of Manipur. While Manipur is no stranger to violence, incidents like these are unprecedented and will likely go down in history as one of the state’s worst ethnic conflagrations.

- The Chief Minister of Manipur, N Biren Singh said at a conference that 60 people have been killed, 231 injured and 1,700 houses, including religious places, have been burnt. Mobs have looted 1041 weapons and 7460 ammunition from Manipur police.
- The Manipur government appointed Additional Director General of Police, ADGP (Intelligence) Ashutosh Sinha (IPS) as the overall operational commander, to control the situation and bring normalcy to the state. He will work under the guidance and supervision of Kuldip Singh, Advisor (Security), Government of Manipur.
- The state administration in the aftermath of the violence in the state decided to suspend the internet services to avoid the attempts of rumour-mongering.
- Forces including Rapid Action Force, RAF, BSF and CRPF have been deployed in Manipur. The army also increased its surveillance over the state by monitoring the movements of UAVs and the deployment of army helicopters within Imphal Valley. The Manipur government also issued [shoot-at-sight orders](#) to contain the widespread violence in the state.

- The state cabinet has decided to grant an ex gratia payment of Rs 5.0 lakh to the relatives of the deceased.

### **Meiteis and Kukis**

Manipur is a mosaic of various communities which have a history of distrust towards each other. Meiteis comprise more than half of the population and tribals - Kukis and Nagas are about 40% of the population. (Kukis - 25% and Nagas - 15%)

- Most of the Meiteis live in Imphal Valley while the tribals live in the hill districts. The Meiteis are more educated and better represented in the business and politics of the state than Kukis and Nagas.
- Kukis and Nagas complain that most of the benefits in the shape of development go to the Meitei inhabited areas which is mainly the Imphal Valley. Also, 40 of the state assembly's 60 seats are reserved for Meiteis though they represent only half of the population.
- In Manipur, Meiteis or any non-tribal person cannot buy land in the hill districts where tribals, Kukis and Nagas live. But Kukis and Nagas are free to buy land in the Imphal Valley, or anywhere else where Meiteis live. The Meiteis live with the fear that they will be slowly outnumbered in the valley.

### **What led to riots in Manipur?**

The High Court, acting on a petition by Meiteis, asked the state to send a proposal to the centre on including Meiteis in the Scheduled Tribes (ST). Kukis and Nagas are against granting the ST status to Meiteis as they fear that Meiteis are already in a better position and have better economic status than the tribals. If Meiteis are granted ST status, they would be able to buy land in the hill regions.

- Violence first erupted in the Torbung area in Churachandpur district during the 'Tribal Solidarity March' organised by the All Tribal Student Union Manipur (ATSUM) on 3rd May 2023 to protest the demand of Meiteis for Scheduled Tribe (ST) status.
- The clashes between the Meiteis and Kukis soon engulfed the whole state.
- Another trigger was the eviction of Kuki villagers which the government said were encroaching on protected forest areas. This move has been opposed by the tribals who say they are indigenous to the area.

### **Way Forward**

- The Meiteis and Kukis and Nagas have to learn to co-exist peacefully and resolve differences amicably.

- The government needs to strengthen the District Councils by giving them Sixth Schedule status. In the tribal areas of the northeast, particularly in the [Sixth Schedule](#) areas, natural resources belong to the people, not the state.
- The GoI has taken various measures to bring a considerable degree of peace in the northeast region, which had seen violent conflicts for decades. The government has negotiated with different insurgent groups and removed several areas from the controversial Armed Forces Special Power Act. However, incidents like these would hamper the peace and development processes in the region. Peace is a prerequisite to taking forward the development of the beautiful northeast.

