

# Manipur

## A Degenerated Insurgency

E. N. Rammohan<sup>\*</sup>

*Manipur, Maid of the Mountains* was the evocative title of a book authored by R Constantine.<sup>1</sup> Manipur continues to be beautiful and lovely, befitting the lyrical title of this book. The State, however, ravaged by militancy for the last forty years and plundered by its politicians, is in shambles and on the brink of a financial emergency. Its environment, particularly in the hills, has been degraded and as a result, its beautiful lake, Loktak, is rapidly silting up. There has been a continual process of siphoning developmental funds. The insurgency, initiated by the Peoples Liberation Army (PLA) in 1979, and by the United Liberation Front (ULF) in the early nineteen nineties, both with the same ideology, has degenerated and proliferated into a number of rag-tag groups, and is now primarily, a widespread extortion racket, which has spread like a cancer into all facets of politics, administration and the social life of the State.

The total area of the state is 22,356 square kilometres. Approximately ninety per cent of the total area consists of hills.<sup>2</sup> The Manipur hills consists of a series of parallel ranges extending

---

\* E N Rammohan, an Indian Police Service (IPS) officer of the Assam-Meghalaya cadre was Director General of the Border Security Force (BSF) and Advisor to the Governor of Manipur.

<sup>1</sup> *Manipur, Maid of the Mountains*, New Delhi: Lancer Publishers, 1981.

<sup>2</sup> Gulab Khan Gori, *Changing Phase of Tribal Area of Manipur*, New Delhi: B R Publishing Corporation, 1984, p. 1.

from the Naga hills to the north and the Mizo and Chin hills to the south. The hill ranges are divided into the eastern and western hills. The Manipur eastern hills form a continuous chain along the Indo-Myanmar frontier for approximately 200 kilometers, with an average height of 1,500 meters. The different ranges are the Nupiita Chinga Malain, Angoching and Yomadung. The Manipur western hills comprise parallel ridges and valleys, running north to south for approximately 180 kilometers. They are the Uningthou, Khoupum, Koubru, Nungba, Kalang, Nungjiabong and Haopi.<sup>3</sup>

The Manipur valley, enclosed by the eastern and western hills, is a large interment basin about 70 kilometers long and 35 kilometers wide with an area of 2,067 square kilometers and an elevation of 760 meters. It is a lacustrine plain, site of an ancient lake subsequently filled up, with its remnants occupying the southeast corner of the valley – the Loktak lake.<sup>4</sup>

The populace of Manipur fall into three groups, all of whom migrated into the valley from the east and the south from Myanmar. The main group, the Meiteis, chanced to settle in the fertile valley by its flowing streams and developed into an agricultural community, thereby getting a head start towards civilization. Of the second group comprising three tribes, the Tangkhuls settled in the Western hills of the present Ukhrul district, the Maos towards the north in present day Senapati and the Zeliangs in the north and west in Tamenglong district. The third group came from the south and settled in Churachandpur district. This is the Chin-Kuki-Mizo group, comprising several sub-tribes. The main Kuki tribe, more enterprising than others, spread to the other districts and even into the Naga hills and North Cachar Hills of the State of Assam.

The Meiteis, having settled in the valley, developed into an early civilization. There were four principalities – Khuma, Lawang, Moirang and Ningthouja – the last enjoying royal status. The Meiteis had a recorded history of two thousand years, beginning with the Cheitharol Kumbaba chronicling the period from 33 AD.<sup>5</sup>, the year of commencement of the reign of

---

<sup>3</sup> Ibid, pp. 2-3.

<sup>4</sup> Vedaja Sanjemnbam, *Manipur: Geography and Regional Development*.

<sup>5</sup> W Ibohal Singh, *The History Of Manipur*,

Pakhangba, and up to 1897 AD<sup>6</sup>, the reign of Maharaj Churachand Singh. The Meitei Kings controlled the valley and hills and extended their sway well into the Naga hills up to Assam and into Myanmar up to the Kebaw valley.<sup>7</sup>

Insurgency came to Manipur with the Naga underground in 1956. The 'Federal Government of Nagaland' (FGN) extended its activities to the Naga districts of Manipur. Manipur Rifles, the armed police of the State, were actively involved in counter insurgency operations along with the Army, and led by their Meitei officers, earned a very good name. When the Naga hills district was given Statehood in 1962,<sup>8</sup> it hurt Meitei sentiments. An ancient kingdom which had ruled the area, including the Naga hills district, was already insulted when it was given a Union Territory (UT) status. Manipuri, the language which was the *lingua franca* of the State, learnt by the Meiteis and all tribals of the State, was not being included in the Eighth Schedule of the Indian Constitution. And now Naga hills, only one district of Assam was given Statehood, while Manipur had to be satisfied with UT status.

In the late sixties and seventies, the policy of the party in power in Delhi was to flush the North East with funds. A group of contractors had come up in Delhi – all hangers-on of the party in power. Nagaland, Manipur and later on Meghalaya and Mizoram, were the States which suffered from this policy. Ninety per cent of the funds that was poured into these States were carried back to Delhi by this coterie of contractors, who were known as the 'Delhi Durbar'. Roads were constructed only on paper and development funds were siphoned off. Food grains for the public distribution system were diverted wholesale into the black market. Manipur was sucked into this vortex and its politicians and bureaucrats quickly adapted to this system.

---

<sup>6</sup> For a chronology of the Meitei Kings, see <http://themanipurpage.tripod.com/history/meiteikings.html>. The British defeated Paona Brajabashi in 1891, captured Manipur and appointed Maharaja Churachand Singh, who was then only 8 years old, to the throne. On August 28, 1891, the British handed over Manipur to Maharaja Budhachandra Singh.

<sup>7</sup> For a brief history of the Meiteis, see <http://themanipurpage.tripod.com/history/puwarimeitei.html>

<sup>8</sup> S K Ghosh, *India's NorthEast Frontier: Fifty Turbulent Years*, Titagarh: Linkman Publication, 1997, p. 5.

In 1975, the FGN signed the Shillong Accord,<sup>9</sup> and peace came to the hills of Ukhrul, Senapati and Tamenglong. The peace was, however, short-lived, and Thuingaleng Muivah, a Tangkhul and Isak Chisi Swu, a Sema, rejected the Shillong Accord to form the National Socialist Council of Nagaland (NSCN) along with S S Khaplang, a Hemi Naga from Myanmar. The NSCN had its General Head Quarters (GHQ) in northern Myanmar. It was at this time that the Peoples Liberation Army (PLA) was formed, on September 25, 1978, by N Bisheswar.<sup>10</sup> An ideologically driven chauvinist group, it was formed because of the corrupt politics and administration of the State.

The PLA was a revolutionary organization and attracted a number of young people. Several brilliant Meitei students studying in national universities left their studies and joined the PLA and were later killed or captured in encounters. The borders of Manipur, curiously, were never policed like the borders of West and East Pakistan. The FGN established its camps in the Somra tracts across Ukhrul and in northern Myanmar in Hemi Naga country. There was, however, no border policy with deployment of border forces along the Myanmar border. Army, Assam Rifles and Village Volunteer Force (VVF) posts were established, but not on the vigorous pattern of the India-Pakistan border. Much later, when the Border Security Force (BSF) was raised, certain posts were established at Behiang, Phaisanjang and Moreh, but these were isolated and no Border Observation Posts (BOPs) were strung along the border to form a linked line of defence. The PLA also crossed into Myanmar, and probably with the assistance of the NSCN,<sup>11</sup> reached the Kachin area, and established training camps with the Kachin Independent Organisation (KIO). The PLA robbed banks and extorted money from the Marwari traders, who were part of the unholy nexus of politicians and bureaucrats in the siphoning of development funds.

---

<sup>9</sup> See Nagaland Accord, The Shillong Agreement of November 11, 1975. South Asia Terrorism Portal; India; Nagaland; Documents; Shillong Accord; [www.satp.org](http://www.satp.org).

<sup>10</sup> For a profile of PLA, see South Asia Terrorism Portal; India; Manipur; Terrorist Outfits; PLA; [www.satp.org](http://www.satp.org).

<sup>11</sup> S K Ghosh, *India's NorthEast Frontier*, p. 49.

There were a number of Meitei settlements in the Kebaw valley, remnants of the Meitei Rajas' earlier domination of the area. When pressure of the Army and paramilitary forces increased in the valley, the PLA took refuge in these villages and also in Sylhet district of Bangladesh, in Srimangal, Chotto Dhamai Adams *bazaar*, where there were Meitei settlements – again vestiges of the earlier extent of the Meitei kingdom.

In a series of swift actions in the early nineteen eighties, the Army was able to capture Bisheswar and several first and second rank leaders were killed in encounters. In 1990, Bronsen, President of the KIO, withdrew support to the NSCN, the PLA and the United Liberation front of Asom (ULFA), who were all being trained by them. The weapons obtained by these organisations from the KIO were seized from the Myanmar army. Neither the NSCN nor the ULFA and PLA really acquired sizeable weapons from the KIO. When support was withdrawn, all three groups took refuge in Bangladesh. The FGN and the Mizo National Front (MNF) had sought and received assistance from Pakistan in the sixties. The NSCN and ULFA leaders soon established contact with the Inter Services Intelligence (ISI), Pakistan's external intelligence agency, through its embassy in Dhaka, and the ISI arranged for arms to be purchased from Thailand. The *Khmer Rouge* in Cambodia had just broken up, and Russian light weapons and Light Machine Guns (LMGs) were up for sale. An arms bazaar soon emerged in Thailand. Weapons purchased here were brought in coastal trading ships to Cox's Bazaar in Bangladesh. In 1991, a group of 250 National Socialist Council of Nagaland – Issak Muivah (NSCN-IM) faction cadres exited from the Chandel district, south of Manipur, marched southwards along the eastern border of Mizoram, and cutting across south of Parva, entered Bangladesh. Here, ten cadres deserted and eventually surrendered to the Border Security Force (BSF) post at Parva and the government came to know of the whole plan. Later, the remaining 240 cadres returned with weapons collected from Cox's Bazaar, and the NSCN-IM got its first consignment of weapons through the ISI. They carried out two more such trips. When the fourth party was returning with weapons, they were intercepted by the army and consequently, a number of NSCN and ULFA cadres were killed. However, this

did not discourage the NSCN and other groups, and several more consignments were brought. Later, the route was changed. Instead of going east from Bandarban in Bangladesh, the groups struck north through the Chittagong Hill Tracts (CHT), and crossed into Mizoram near the tri-junction between CHT, Tripura and Mizoram. From here, they traversed east and crossed at Tipaimukh into Manipur and, turning north, crossed into Tamenglong and then into Nagaland. This route was used several times by the NSCN-IM. It was only once in 1999 that the Assam Rifles ambushed a group of approximately 60 NSCN-IM cadres marching up the Longai valley. Nine NSCN-IM cadres were killed in this ambush. Reportedly, the last consignment brought in July 2000 up to Mizoram was sent from Mizoram via Jiribam, Tamenglong to Nagaland. Consignments of year 2001 were expected to have crossed Jiribam any time in December or January 2002. By the late nineteen nineties, arms merchants had also set up their bases in Myanmar across Chandel district.

The United National Liberation Front (UNLF) was founded on November 24, 1964, by Areambam Somerendra Singh.<sup>12</sup> It was a secessionist organisation and was the culmination of several movements like the shadowy Pan-Mongoloid movement and the Revolutionary Nationalist Party (RNP), which raised the banner of independence in 1953. The UNLF was preceded by the Revolutionary Government of Manipur (RGM). A spate of robberies, including the looting of the Treasury in Imphal in 1968 and 1969, were probably carried out by members of the UNLF and RGM. By 1970, there was information that the RGM had established linkages with the Naga underground. A link was established in East Pakistan and 52 RGM members crossed the border in 1969. However, they were arrested during combing operations in Cachar and Tripura. Oinam Sudhir Kumar, the more radical leader who was instrumental in the formation of RGM, was arrested in 1972. Only Somerendra remained free. By 1970, the RGM was leading an anti-Mayang [anti-‘outsider’] movement. In 1972, when Manipur got statehood, the RGM lost its base and many of their cadres were also arrested.

---

<sup>12</sup> For a profile of UNLF, see South Asia Terrorism Portal; India; Manipur; Terrorist Outfits; UNLF; [www.satp.org](http://www.satp.org).

The UNLF remained a social organisation for a decade after this, and took to arms again only in the early nineteen nineties. Funds were collected primarily through extortion from the business community and government servants, and the outfit purchased arms from the border in Myanmar. In 1990, a faction led by Namoijam Oken Singh left the UNLF and formed the UNLF (Oken group), which later merged with splinter groups of the Kangleipak Communist Party (KCP) and the People's Revolutionary Party of Kangleipak (PREPAK) and formed the Kanglei Yawol Kanna Lup (KYKL).

The third militant group of the valley, the PREPAK was formed under the leadership of R K Tulachandra on October 9, 1977.<sup>13</sup> Another revolutionary and chauvinist group, it collected money by robbing banks, extortion from the business community and also set up camps in Myanmar for training its cadres. The KCP was founded by Ibohanbi on April 14, 1980, with a leftist chauvinist ideology. Its major demand has been the ouster of outsiders. It has its GHQ in the Chandel district and a camp in Myanmar. It has today degenerated to the status of an outfit involved in mere extortion.

Till the nineteen nineties, the Valley groups operated only in the Valley, and had only some bases in Chandel district. This district has a scattering of smaller Naga tribes – Maring, Anal, Chothe and Kom, along with a number of Kukis. Hilly and forested with hardly any roads, its border with Myanmar is totally unguarded. The only main road links Palel in the Valley with Moreh on the Myanmar border. The NSCN-IM operated in Chandel district, finding sanctuary in the Naga villages. Churachandpur district was the only district free of militant groups.

All this changed in 1993, when the Kuki National Army (KNA)<sup>14</sup> was set up in Myanmar. The Kuki-Chin-Mizo group and

---

<sup>13</sup> For a profile of PREPAK, see South Asia Terrorism Portal; India; Manipur; Terrorist Outfits; PREPAK; [www.satp.org](http://www.satp.org).

<sup>14</sup> Kuki National Army (KNA) was established under the leadership of Suvitulon Haokip in June 1991. It has a political wing called Kuki National Organisation (KNO). Its major aim is to fight for a 'Kukiland' comprising parts of India and Myanmar through an armed struggle. It is active in the Indo-Myanmar border areas. See South Asia Terrorism Portal; India; Manipur; Terrorist Outfits; KNA; [www.satp.org](http://www.satp.org)

the Nagas had never got along well, ever since they had migrated and settled in the Manipur hills. The Kukis had been used both by the Meitei Rajas and the British as a buffer against the Nagas. It was this, perhaps, that prompted the formation of the KNA across the Moreh border. The bait offered was control of the rich spoils of smuggling through Moreh. The NSCN-IM was bidding to control this zone. The Valley groups, who had bases in Chandel district, were also bidding for the control of Moreh through the sizeable Meitei population there and across the border in the Kebaw valley. It was only the Kuki population who did not have a say on the issue. The KNA filled this vacuum.

Fierce clashes occurred between the KNA and the NSCN-IM, and the Chandel hills reverberated with gunfire. The groups turned savage and attacked each other's villages. The KNA emerged badly bruised and a large number of Kukis whose villages were burnt had to be resettled.

The NSCN-IM had long been looking for a chance to get a foothold in the Valley. Their first success came when N. Oken split from the UNLF and formed the KYKL. The NSCN-IM had established an extensive extortion net in Nagaland, and the Naga districts of Ukhrul, Senapati and Tamenglong. When it linked up with the KYKL, it got a foothold in the Valley. It now secured an opportunity to link up with a Kuki group also.

The KNA, badly bruised, appealed for assistance and volunteers from all other tribes of the Kuki group. The Paite's, who live in south Churachandpur, objected and accused the KNA of unnecessarily taking on the NSCN-IM. The KNA retaliated by attacking the Paite villages. Bitter clashes erupted between the sister tribes and each burnt the other's villages. The NSCN-IM, at a distance, drew 'comfort' from the ensuing confusion. The Paite's, on seeking refuge south of the border ran straight into the NSCN-IM. The Zomi Reunification Army (ZRA) comprising the Zomis and the Paite's was formed and were armed and trained by the NSCN-IM. The KNA found the erstwhile defenceless Paite's fighting back. The NSCN-IM had penetrated the Kuki-Chin-Mizo group and were to do this again.

The NSCN had split in 1998. The Tangkhul Nagas never had a healthy relationship with the Konyak and Hemi Nagas. In the NSCN encampments, the tribes lived in separate camps. The split



was violent in nature and many Tangkhul Nagas were killed in Myanmar as they fled to the Indian frontier. Consequent to the split, Khaplang primarily controlled the eastern areas of Nagaland, while Muivah and Isaak Swu controlled the western areas as also the four hill districts of Manipur.

The NSCN-IM succeeded in penetrating the valley areas when the Oken faction of the UNLF broke off and organised the KYKL. In 1990, the UNLF developed close linkages with the National Socialist Council of Nagaland – Khaplang (NSCN-K). This was natural as Muivah held that Rajkumar Meghen alias Sana Yaima, leader of the UNLF, had never warned him of the impending attack on his group by the Khaplang faction. The ejection of Oken also drove him towards the NSCN-IM. The KYKL were equipped by the NSCN-IM and they commenced joint operations in the Valley. In 1994, a clash occurred between Oken and Achou Toijamba over organisational matters, and the KYKL split into two factions, KYKL (O) and KYKL (T). Meanwhile, the NSCN-K had made inroads into Tamenglong and had formed a Zeliangrong unit. They were able to exert their sway over part of the National Highway 53 (NH-53) passing east-west through the Tamenglong district. The KYKL (T) linked up with the NSCN-K and their cadres began training in camps in north Myanmar.

When the Kuki-Naga clashes occurred, the UNLF assisted the Kukis with relief, and this helped them to get a foothold in the Churachandpur district. They were able to purchase considerable land from the Kuki chiefs. The UNLF did this as per a plan. Soon after, they also set up several camps along the Churachandpur-Tipaimukh road. The lack of forces posted outside Churachandpur town and poor communication facilities helped them in occupying four sub-divisional HQs – Singngat, Henglep, Thanlon and Parbung. The civil administration tamely abdicated, as there was no force deployed. This was in year 1998. It was only in year 2000 that the BSF, tasked to clear the area, occupied the four sub-divisions. Unfortunately, the BSF was withdrawn from three of the sub-divisions and the UNLF and PLA reoccupied all three in year 2001.

The broad rectangle comprising several thousand hectares, bounded by the NH-53 to the north, the Thanjing hills to the east;

the Churachandpur-Tipaimukh road to the south, and the Man Bahadur road from Tipaimukh to Jiribam in the west is a free zone, where the PLA, UNLF and the Hmar Peoples Convention – Democracy (HPC-D) have training camps and bases. The NSCN-K's Zeliangrong unit linked up with the UNLF along the NH-53. Here again, the Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF), which was guarding this highway, was withdrawn in year 2000 and consequently, this highway has been parcelled between the NSCN-IM, NSCN-K, UNLF and PLA.

The creation of the Kuki National Organisation (KNO)<sup>15</sup> and the KNA, led to the establishing of a parallel organisation called the Kuki National Front (KNF),<sup>16</sup> primarily due to leadership rivalries. Further squabbles led to a second split with the formation of KNF – Presidential (KNF-P) and the KNF – Military Council (KNF-MC). Later, there were further splits. With ideology being just a fig leaf, all these groups were nothing but unvarnished extortion outfits.

The State Legislative Assembly elections of year 2000 spawned two more militant groupings among the Kukis. Thangkholem Haokip, left out in the run up to the elections, decided to oppose the KNO and KNA. He also sent feelers to the NSCN-IM for an alliance. Thangkholem raised a new group called the United Kuki Liberation Front (UKLF). Chandel district, in the absence of any armed force support, came under the control of the NSCN-IM, UKLF combine. In a parallel development, Khulam Hangshing, who controlled the Sadar Hills of Senapati district, denied a chance of contesting the elections by the KNF-MC, rebelled and extended support to the ancient enemy. The fertile Saikul Valley was lost to the KNF-MC as a new outfit, the Kuki Revolutionary Army (KRA), was formed with NSCN-IM weapons in November 2000.

The last of the Kuki-Chin-Mizo militant groups is the HPC-D. Primarily a Mizoram militant group, it operates on the

---

<sup>15</sup> KNO is the political wing of Kuki National Army.

<sup>16</sup> Kuki National Front (KNF) was formed under the leadership of Rancho Thangboi Kuki on May 18, 1988 with the primary objective of securing a separate, independent state for the Kuki tribe and the unification of all scattered Kukis in the new homeland. See South Asia Terrorism Portal; India; Manipur; Terrorist Outfits; KNF; [www.satp.org](http://www.satp.org).

Tipaimukh-Jiribam axis and is linked to the UNLF. Its original link with the NSCN-IM is, however, not completely forgotten.

A new trend has developed in the last few years. Links have been established between the militant groups and politicians. The elections in year 2000 was witness to several candidates, both in the plains and hills, being supported by different militant groups. For the last couple of years, the valley and hill militant groups have penetrated the State and central administration and carved out specific areas of influence. Every month when salaries are disbursed, a percentage is deducted and paid to the militant groups. In effect, this was a replication of what was done by the NSCN in Nagaland. In Nagaland, as also in the Naga districts of Manipur, regular deductions are labelled as house tax and ration money. The militant groups reportedly interfere in the award of contracts and are also known to enter offices carrying files to secure signatures of officers at gunpoint.

During the last few years, several officers who resisted such actions of the militant groups were shot. An IAS officer, Director Tourism, was shot in his office for failing to agree to a payment of ransom.<sup>17</sup> The Registrar of Co-operatives was abducted and severely injured for the same reason.<sup>18</sup> The Director of Education suffered the same fate. The Divisional Engineer, Telephones, was killed for failing to waive the bills of two Public Call Office (PCOs) operated by the NSCN-IM and PLA. The Chief Engineer of Loktak project was killed on January 12, 2000, after his security was withdrawn, reportedly on an unwritten order to the Director General of Police.<sup>19</sup> Through linkages with the politicians, the militant groups succeeded in subverting the public distribution system. It was only after central forces were deployed in crucial State government departments, that the penetration into government departments was broken. Many of the important heads of department have taken to sleeping in their offices, as these are guarded.

---

<sup>17</sup> See "Manipur heading towards total anarchy", *Daily Excelsior*, Jammu, December 28, 2000.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>19</sup> Project Chief Engineer, Subhash Chandra Sher, was reportedly killed by militants belonging to the Kanglei Yawol Kanna Lup. See "KYKL claims hand in Loktak killing", *Northeast Vigil*, Issue No. 1. 16, January 16, 2000 at [www.northeastvigil.com/newsarch/16012000i.htm](http://www.northeastvigil.com/newsarch/16012000i.htm).

As some of them wryly put it – ‘There are queues in our houses every morning of representatives of different militant groups’. In this context, Chandel was the worst affected among the districts, primarily due to the lack of deployment of paramilitary forces in this district. On November 24, 2000, the Deputy Commissioner (DC) left for his office with five riflemen of the Manipur Rifles. A group of thirty NSCN-IM and UKLF cadres were waiting in his office and with his arrival, the car and his escort were surrounded. The escort was disarmed and locked up in one of the rooms of the office and the Deputy Commissioner was led at gunpoint to his room along with five of his Block Development Officers (BDOs). The DC was then forced to sign cheques for Rs. 4,480,000 – District Rural Development Agency (DRDA) money meant for development projects in five blocks. The BDOs were then forcibly taken to the bank. The bank had by then closed transactions for the day. The DC was then confined to his house, where he remained under custody for the next two days. On November 27, 2000, the BDOs were again taken to the bank and the cheques cashed by the NSCN-IM and UKLF cadres. Surprisingly, neither the Manipur Rifles nor the police located at Chandel informed the State HQs about the incident. It was only on November 27, 2000, that the DC apprised the government at Imphal about the incident.

Besides the above mentioned, there are any number of other incidents where contracts are procured by unqualified members of militant groups at gunpoint and work executed by them. Executives engineers and their seniors are forced at gunpoint to carry out only 50 per cent of the work and record in their measurement books that 100 per cent work has been executed and pass cheques for the full amount to the contractor. 50 per cent of the amount is reportedly taken by the concerned militant group. No department was spared in this kind of extortion. In the Food and Civil Supplies department, tankers of kerosene oil, petrol and diesel were diverted from the dealers and sold in the black market by all militant groups.

It is clear that ideology has long since been dispensed with. In the Valley and hills, while the common people look to the government for succour, there is a half educated crust which has become increasingly anti-national and blame the Union

government for all the ills. The burgeoning strength of the NSCN-IM has led to fear among the Meitei community that this underground group, along with the Tangkhul, Mao, Paumei, Maram, Zeliang and other Nagas behind them, would one day control Manipur. Despite the extortion, the Meitei community began to believe that only their own militant groups would ultimately protect them against the NSCN-IM. There was even a doubt that the North Eastern States might break up. Given such a scenario, the Meiteis genuinely feared that they would be dominated by the NSCN and the Nagas, putting an end to the 2000-year domination of the Meiteis. This was felt to be intolerable.

The fear of the four Naga districts becoming part of Nagaland or the *Nagalim* was concretised when the cease-fire was signed with the NSCN-IM in 1997. Meitei pride was hurt and a massive procession was organised in Imphal, as apprehensions grew that the 2000-year history and domination of the hill districts would be forgotten, and the Meiteis would only be left with the Imphal Valley.

The cease-fire was extended twice. When it was to be extended a third time, the NSCN-IM insisted that the cease-fire should also be extended<sup>20</sup> to the four hill districts of Manipur and the Government of India (GoI) agreed to an extension 'without territorial limits' in June 2001.<sup>21</sup>

The Meiteis exploded in anger. There was large-scale arson and rioting and it was beyond the Manipur police to withstand the chauvinistic pressure. The Raj Bhavan was saved from being burnt. The half-educated crust made it out as if this was a repeat of the 1891 attack on the Residency,<sup>22</sup> when it was burnt down after the British garrison retreated. Front organisations of the main underground groups in the valley, the All Manipur Union of Clubs Organisation (AMUCO) and the All Manipur Students

---

<sup>20</sup> See South Asia Terrorism Portal; India; States; Nagaland; Documents; Papers; Extension of the cease-fire with the NSCN-IM; [www.satp.org](http://www.satp.org).

<sup>21</sup> The Government of India and the NSCN IM) on June 14, 2001, agreed to extend the operation of the on-going cease-fire for one year i.e. upto July 31, 2002. The most salient feature of this latest extension of cease-fire is that it was to be without any territorial limits. See South Asia Terrorism Portal; Countries; India; States; Nagaland; Timeline 2001; [www.satp.org](http://www.satp.org).

<sup>22</sup> Constantine, *Manipur, Maid of the Mountains*, p. 31.

Union (AMSU), utilised the mood to influence the common people about the intransigence of the Union government. For some time, the Valley groups, who had been rendered relatively unpopular because of the abductions and widespread extortion, managed to come close to the common people. However, this did not last for long.

What is the framework of a solution for Manipur? It is a truism that the Union government, in its focus on the western border and Pakistan, has relegated the North East to the backburner. This imbalance needs to be corrected. In any counter-insurgency model, moreover, the military and civil effort must go together. With this as a guiding principle, the following five steps must be taken by the Union government:

- ✍ Ensure that officers of the All India Services stay in the State. Currently, ninety per cent of them are on deputation and continually manipulate their 'non-return'. *Most of the officers of the last five batches have got cadre transfers.* The Union Home Ministry must post two battalions of the Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF) in the State to exclusively guard and escort all central and State government employees. They should guard all offices and residential colonies. All civil police and judicial officers should be shifted to government colonies. Once their security is ensured, there will be no excuses for cadre officers to run away. The tenure rules should be changed to ensure that there are mandatory five year tenures in the State. Terms of service in the North-Eastern cadres should be made specially attractive.
- ✍ Posting of judicial officers in the State should be specially monitored. If necessary, judicial officers should be shuffled from among the North Eastern States to ensure that they are not pressurised to favour militants being tried.
- ✍ The Valley districts have roads and tracks and are fully accessible. Ten battalions of the Central Para-Military Force (CPMF) should be deployed in the Valley in a counter-insurgency grid. The hill districts have very few roads and will need six to eight battalions each, along with helicopter support to effectively dominate them.

- ✍ As the State is dependent on central finance, all developmental schemes in the State should be monitored by officers deputed from the Centre on short tours. For example, all District Rural Development Agency (DRDA) schemes should be monitored by the DC and an officer from the Union Rural Development Ministry. This will ensure that there will be no interference by the politicians or the militants.
- ✍ BSF should be deployed in a string of BOPs three kilometres apart on the borders of Myanmar. Simultaneously, extensive construction of roads should be taken up in all the hill districts and also all along the border.

Development schemes should be taken up with a view to open up employment in the private sector. There is an enormous scope for forestry, horticulture, piggery, poultry and fisheries in the hills and plains. The unemployed educated and dropouts are the main source of recruitment for militant groups. Thus, this section should be targeted in all development projects. It is now imperative that the Centre come up with a comprehensive plan that factors in these elements.