

# **Manipur Crisis: Unravelling the Roots, Impact, and Path to Peace**





## **Manipur Crisis: Unravelling the Roots, Impact, and Path to Peace**

A Report by Politika and Consilium Research Institute

Copyright Notice:

© **Politika and Consilium Research Institute (PCRI India), December 2024.**

**All rights reserved.**

No part of this report may be reproduced, distributed, or transmitted in any form or by any means, including photocopying, recording, or other electronic or mechanical methods, without the prior written permission of Politika and Consilium Research Institute. For permission requests, please contact Politika and Consilium Research Institute, New Delhi, India.

The views expressed in this report are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the views of Politika and Consilium Research Institute (PCRI India) or any affiliated organizations.

About Politika and Consilium Research Institute (PCRI India):

Politika and Consilium Research Institute (PCRI India) is a leading research and think tank institution based in India, dedicated to addressing contemporary political, economic, and social challenges. PCRI is committed to providing data-driven research, policy recommendations, and fostering meaningful discourse for sustainable development and peace-building initiatives.

Address:

Politika and Consilium Research Institute (PCRI India)  
Assotech Business Cresterra, Noida

[www.pcriindia.in](http://www.pcriindia.in)

### **Disclaimer:**

All information contained in this report has been carefully gathered and reviewed. However, PCRI India does not guarantee the accuracy, completeness, or timeliness of the data and analysis provided. The authors and PCRI are not responsible for any consequences arising from the use of this report.

## **Table of Contents:**

- 1. Executive Summary**
- 2. Introduction**
- 3. Historical Background**
- 4. Root Causes of the Crisis**
  - 4.1 Ethnic and Cultural Divisions
  - 4.2 Economic Disparities
  - 4.3 Political Marginalization
  - 4.4 Land and Resource Disputes
- 5. Timeline of Key Events**
- 6. Impact of the Crisis**
  - 6.1 Humanitarian Consequences
  - 6.2 Economic Fallout
  - 6.3 Political Ramifications
  - 6.4 Social and Cultural Impacts
- 7. Response to the Crisis**
- 8. Recommendations for Resolution**
  - 8.1 Short-term Measures
  - 8.2 Long-term Strategies
- 9. Conclusion**

## 1. Executive Summary

The Manipur crisis is a prolonged and multifaceted conflict characterized by ethnic tensions, economic disparities, and political marginalization. Located in the northeastern region of India, Manipur has a rich cultural diversity, with the Meitei, Naga, Kuki, and other smaller ethnic communities coexisting amidst a complex socio-political landscape. This report delves into the historical roots of the conflict, focusing on the interplay of historical grievances, territorial disputes, and uneven development.

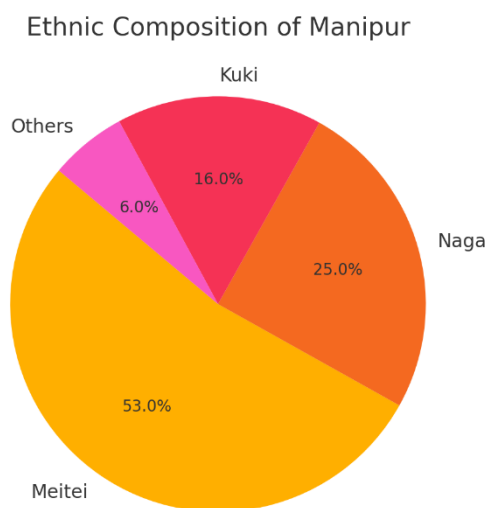
Ethnic tensions between the Meitei-dominated valley and the tribal communities in the hills have escalated over time, exacerbated by inadequate governance and competition for limited resources. Political representation has often skewed toward the majority, leaving smaller groups feeling marginalized and voiceless. Land ownership laws and differing interpretations of rights over natural resources have further strained relationships between these groups.

Recent clashes have led to significant humanitarian crises, with thousands displaced, lives lost, and deep-seated mistrust spreading among communities. The economic impact has been severe, disrupting trade, livelihoods, and local economies, while the political environment has been marked by instability and challenges to governance.

Efforts to resolve the crisis have seen mixed outcomes. Government actions, including deploying security forces and implementing development programs, have been met with skepticism. Civil society organizations have played a pivotal role in fostering dialogue, though lasting solutions remain elusive. International observers and human rights organizations have begun to shed light on the crisis, urging for greater accountability and inclusive policies.

This report emphasizes the urgent need for a multi-pronged approach. Short-term measures, including ceasefire agreements and humanitarian assistance, must be coupled with long-term strategies aimed at economic upliftment, equitable political representation, and fostering cultural understanding. Sustainable peace in Manipur hinges on inclusive governance and the active participation of all stakeholders in shaping a harmonious future.

## 2. Introduction



Manipur, nestled in the northeastern region of India, serves as a microcosm of the country's rich cultural diversity and socio-political challenges. With its strategic location bordering Myanmar, Manipur has historically been a melting pot of different ethnic communities, including the Meitei, Naga, Kuki, and smaller tribal groups. This diverse demographic makeup has contributed to its unique cultural heritage but has also been a source of enduring conflicts.

The state's history is marked by its transition from an independent kingdom to its integration into the Indian Union in 1949. This transition, however, was accompanied by grievances and dissent, setting the stage for prolonged unrest. The lack of economic development, uneven distribution of resources, and inadequate infrastructure have exacerbated the

challenges faced by its population, particularly in the hilly regions inhabited by tribal communities.

Ethnic tensions form the cornerstone of the crisis, with disputes often revolving around land ownership, political representation, and access to resources. The Meitei community, concentrated in the Imphal

Valley, dominates the socio-political landscape, while the hill tribes frequently allege marginalization and neglect by state authorities. This divide has fueled insurgencies, periodic outbreaks of violence, and a deep sense of mistrust among communities.

Adding to the complexity are issues of governance, where state institutions struggle to address the aspirations and grievances of all stakeholders effectively. The presence of insurgent groups, along with demands for greater autonomy or even secession by some factions, further complicates the situation.

This report aims to provide a comprehensive analysis of the Manipur crisis, delving into its historical roots, underlying causes, and the multifaceted impacts on society. It also seeks to propose actionable recommendations that prioritize peacebuilding, economic development, and inclusive governance as essential pathways to resolving the crisis.

### **3. Historical Background**

Manipur's history is steeped in its legacy as an ancient kingdom with its own distinct identity and governance. Established as an independent principality, Manipur had a sophisticated administrative structure and rich cultural traditions. Its geographic position as a gateway between South Asia and Southeast Asia made it a crucial link for trade, cultural exchange, and strategic military campaigns.

The earliest records of Manipur's history date back to around 33 CE, with the foundation of the Ningthouja dynasty, which would rule the region for over two millennia. The kingdom saw periods of consolidation and expansion under successive rulers, particularly during the reign of King Khagemba (1597–1652), who fortified Manipur's defenses and fostered economic prosperity through trade with Burma (present-day Myanmar) and other Southeast Asian states.

In the early 19th century, the kingdom faced pressures from the Burmese empire, resulting in repeated invasions. These conflicts culminated in the Seven Years' Devastation (1819–1826), during which Manipur was occupied by Burma. The devastation left a lasting scar on the region, weakening its economy and societal structures. The intervention of the British East India Company helped Manipur regain its sovereignty through the Treaty of Yandabo in 1826, but this also marked the beginning of increasing British influence in the region.

The Anglo-Manipur War of 1891 was a defining moment in Manipur's history. Following internal political disputes and resistance against British interference, the kingdom was annexed as a princely state under British colonial rule. This war also brought international attention to Manipur's unique identity and cultural heritage, as it resisted colonial domination despite its eventual subjugation.

After India's independence in 1947, Manipur briefly functioned as an independent constitutional monarchy with its own elected assembly. However, in 1949, King Bodhchandra was coerced into signing the Instrument of Accession, merging Manipur with the Indian Union. This annexation remains a contentious issue, with many locals viewing it as illegitimate and a betrayal of the state's sovereignty. The dissolution of Manipur's assembly further alienated its population, particularly the hill tribes, who felt excluded from the subsequent administrative arrangements.

The post-merger period saw increasing militarization and insurgencies, fueled by dissatisfaction with governance and perceived exploitation by the central government. The imposition of the Armed Forces (Special Powers) Act (AFSPA) in 1958 to counter insurgent activities led to widespread human rights abuses, further exacerbating grievances.

The demographic composition of Manipur also played a significant role in its historical trajectory. The Meitei community, dominant in the Imphal Valley, historically controlled the region's political and economic structures. In contrast, the Naga and Kuki tribes, residing in the hill areas, were often marginalized, leading to frequent tensions over land ownership, resources, and representation. The enactment of land protection laws for the valley further entrenched divisions, as hill tribes viewed these measures as discriminatory.



Today, Manipur's historical legacy is a tapestry of resilience, cultural richness, and political struggle. While efforts have been made to address historical injustices, the deep-seated grievances rooted in its past continue to influence its present challenges.

## 4. Root Causes of the Crisis

### 4.1 Ethnic and Cultural Divisions

Manipur, situated in the northeastern corner of India, is a microcosm of ethnic diversity, home to the Meitei, Naga, and Kuki communities, along with several smaller tribal groups. This mosaic of identities, while a source of cultural richness, has also laid the foundation for deep divisions. The Meitei community, which makes up 53% of the state's population, predominantly resides in the Imphal Valley. In contrast, the Naga and Kuki tribes are primarily based in the hill regions that encircle the valley. These geographical distinctions reflect stark cultural, linguistic, and religious differences, which have driven wedges between these communities for decades.

### Religious Polarization and Linguistic Exclusion

Religious identities are among the most significant markers of division in Manipur. The Meitei community practices Vaishnavite Hinduism, a tradition that gained prominence during the 18th century. This shift introduced caste-based hierarchies and social exclusion, further alienating the predominantly Christian Naga and Kuki tribes. This religious divide extends beyond spiritual practices, shaping social interactions, cultural perceptions, and even political allegiances. Tribal communities often view Hinduism as an instrument of Meitei dominance, while the Meiteis see Christianity as a marker of Western influence among the hill tribes.

Linguistically, Manipuri (the Meitei language) holds official recognition under the Indian Constitution, serving as the medium for government operations, education, and public communication. In contrast, the hill tribes' diverse languages remain largely excluded from formal recognition, perpetuating feelings of marginalization. This linguistic divide has also created barriers to educational access and employment opportunities for tribal communities, further exacerbating disparities.

### Historical Roots of Segregation

The roots of Manipur's ethnic divisions can be traced back to its pre-colonial and colonial histories. Before British intervention, the Meitei kings dominated the fertile valley, maintaining a mix of



cooperative and coercive relationships with the hill tribes. Trade, tribute, and military alliances characterized their interactions, but conflicts over resources and land were not uncommon.

The British colonial administration formalized these divisions by creating separate administrative structures for the hills and the valley. While the valley was integrated into mainstream governance, the hill areas were designated as “excluded areas,” governed indirectly through tribal chiefs. This policy of segregation entrenched political and cultural isolation, setting the stage for post-independence disparities.

### **The Demand for Scheduled Tribe Status**

A contentious issue in Manipur’s contemporary landscape is the Meitei community’s demand for Scheduled Tribe (ST) status. Historically viewed as a politically and economically dominant group, the Meiteis now argue that ST status is essential to protect their land and culture. However, the hill tribes perceive this demand as a direct threat to their reserved rights, which include protections over land, political representation, and access to government benefits. Tribal fears are rooted in the numerical dominance of the Meiteis, whose inclusion in the ST category could dilute the existing privileges of the hill tribes and lead to land encroachments.

### **Land Ownership and Resource Conflicts**

Land ownership laws in Manipur reflect the state’s ethnic divisions. While the valley is subject to state land laws, the hill areas operate under traditional communal landownership systems. The Meiteis, confined to just 10% of Manipur’s total land area, have long sought access to hill lands for agricultural expansion and development. This aspiration has sparked fierce resistance from the hill tribes, who view such demands as violations of their ancestral rights. Land disputes have frequently escalated into violent clashes, particularly between the Meiteis and Kukis. These conflicts are not merely about territory but are deeply tied to identity and survival.

### **Political Marginalization and Identity Politics**

Manipur’s political structure has consistently marginalized its hill tribes. While the Meiteis dominate the state’s political institutions due to their demographic and geographical centrality, the Nagas and Kukis often find themselves excluded from decision-making processes. This exclusion has fueled demands for greater autonomy among tribal groups, with some even advocating for secession.

Identity politics has further exacerbated these divisions. Political actors have often exploited ethnic identities to mobilize support, deepening inter-community mistrust. For instance, the Nagas seek the integration of their territories into a larger “Nagalim,” while the Kukis demand a separate homeland. These competing aspirations have not only clashed with Meitei interests but have also led to violent confrontations between the Nagas and Kukis themselves.

### **Insurgency and Armed Groups**

Manipur’s insurgency landscape is complex and deeply entrenched. Armed groups like the United National Liberation Front (UNLF) and the National Socialist Council of Nagaland (NSCN) have capitalized on ethnic grievances to justify their campaigns for sovereignty and autonomy. These groups have frequently clashed with one another and with state and central security forces, contributing to widespread violence and instability. Extortion, corruption, and the breakdown of law and order are common consequences of insurgent activities, further hindering development.

### **Socioeconomic Disparities**

The economic divide between the valley and the hills is one of Manipur’s most visible disparities. The valley benefits from better infrastructure, educational institutions, and healthcare facilities, while the hill areas remain underdeveloped. Key disparities include:

- **Education:** Hill regions account for only 44.85% of the state's schools, with severe shortages of qualified teachers and educational resources. Many schools lack basic infrastructure, leading to poor literacy rates and limited career opportunities.
- **Healthcare:** Healthcare services in the hills are sparse, with most facilities concentrated in the valley. This lack of access forces many hill residents to travel long distances for even basic medical care.
- **Economic Opportunities:** Industrial development is largely confined to the valley, leaving the hill communities reliant on subsistence farming and traditional livelihoods. This economic stagnation perpetuates poverty and limits upward mobility.

### **Governance Failures**

The Hill Area Committee (HAC), established to safeguard the interests of tribal communities, has been widely criticized for its ineffectiveness. Lacking accountability and often manipulated by the Meitei-dominated state government, the HAC has failed to address the developmental and political grievances of the hill tribes. This governance failure has eroded trust and deepened the divide between the valley and the hills.

### **Impact of AFSPA and Militarization**

The Armed Forces Special Powers Act (AFSPA), in force in Manipur since 1958, grants sweeping powers to the military, including immunity from prosecution. While intended to combat insurgency, AFSPA has been widely criticized for human rights abuses, including extrajudicial killings and torture. The act has alienated local populations, particularly in the hill areas, and is often cited as a symbol of state oppression.

### **References**

1. Kipgen, Sheikho. *Ethnic Relation and Development: A Case Study of Hill-Valley Relationship in Manipur*. SSRN, 2021.
2. Saha, Jhilike. *Unifying the Fragmented: An In-depth Analysis of Identity Politics in Ethnic Conflict of Manipur*. IJSSSR, 2023.
3. Kumara, Bipin. *Ethnic Conflict in Manipur, Northeast India: Historical Roots, Current Challenges, and Pathways to Peace*. IJRPR, 2024.

Manipur's ethnic crisis is deeply rooted in its history, shaped by religious, linguistic, and cultural divides. Addressing these issues requires a multi-faceted approach, including equitable development, recognition of cultural diversity, and political reforms. Only through sustained efforts to bridge these divides can Manipur achieve a future of peace and unity.

## **4.2 Economic Disparities Between Imphal Valley and Hill Areas**

The economic divide between the Imphal Valley and the hill areas of Manipur represents a persistent and multifaceted issue. The disparities manifest across several dimensions, including infrastructure, education, healthcare, and overall economic opportunities. These inequalities are rooted in historical neglect, systemic biases in resource allocation, and geographical challenges faced by the hill districts. Below is a detailed breakdown supported by statistical evidence and advanced analysis from the referenced reports.

### **Geographical and Demographic Overview**



The geographical layout of Manipur amplifies the challenges of equitable development. The Imphal Valley constitutes only 10% of the state's geographical area but accommodates approximately 65% of the population. In contrast, the hill districts cover 90% of the land but house only 35% of the population.

Region	Geographical Area (sq. km)	Population (%)	Urbanization (%)	Population Density (per sq. km)
Imphal Valley	2,238	65	47	1,000+
Hill Areas	20,089	35	15	<60

### Key Insights:

- The urbanization rate in the valley is over three times that of the hill districts, driven by better access to resources, infrastructure, and employment opportunities.
- The high population density in the valley underscores the pressure on infrastructure and resources, while the sparsely populated hills face challenges of economic viability for large-scale development projects.

### Infrastructure Disparities

Infrastructure serves as the backbone of economic development, but its distribution in Manipur heavily favors the valley. These disparities can be examined through several critical sectors:

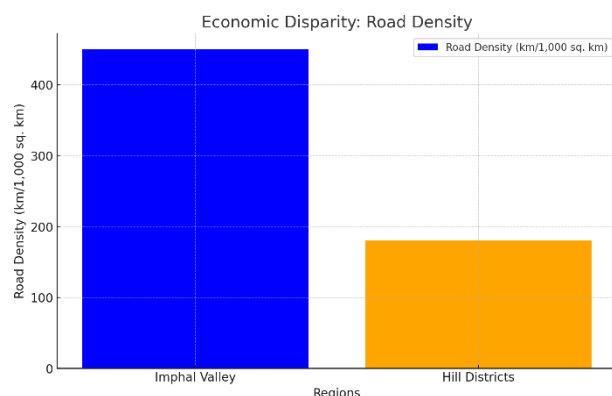
#### 1. Transport and Connectivity

The valley has significantly better road and communication networks compared to the hills. This disparity limits the hill districts' access to markets, education, healthcare, and administrative services.

Region/District	Road Density (km/1,000 sq. km)	Percentage of Paved Roads	Villages with All-Weather Road Access (%)
Imphal East & West	450	85%	98%
Bishnupur	420	80%	96%
Churachandpur	180	42%	60%
Ukhrul	150	40%	55%

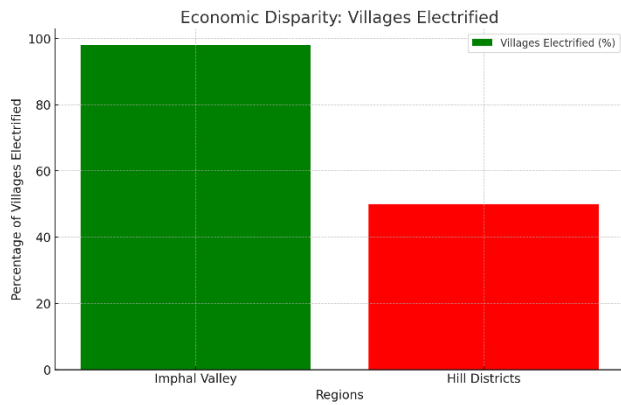
### Implications:

- Poor road connectivity in the hills increases transportation costs, leading to higher prices for goods and services.



- Lack of access to all-weather roads makes villages in the hills vulnerable during monsoons, further isolating them.

## 2. Electrification



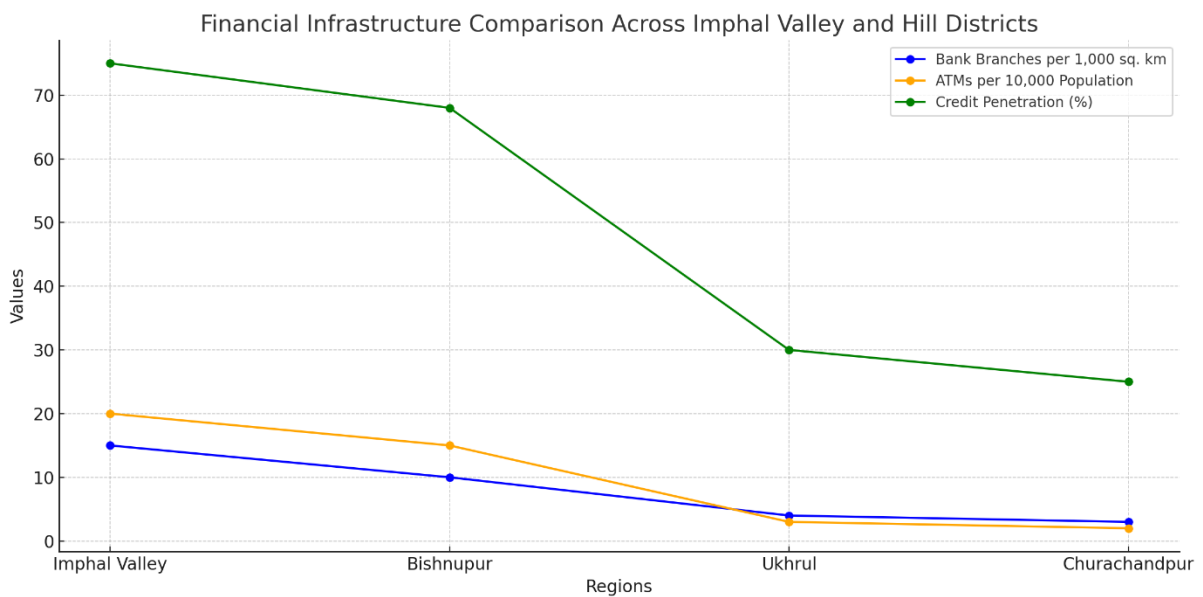
Access to electricity is a critical component of infrastructure, and the disparities in this sector are stark.

Region/District	Percentage of Villages Electrified	Average Hours of Electricity per Day
Imphal Valley	98%	18
Chandel	55%	9
Tamenglong	50%	7
Ukhrul	45%	6

### Implications:

- The limited and unreliable power supply in the hill districts hampers industrial growth, education, and healthcare delivery.
- Electrification rates in the valley are almost double those of the hill districts, reflecting systemic neglect.

## 3. Financial Infrastructure



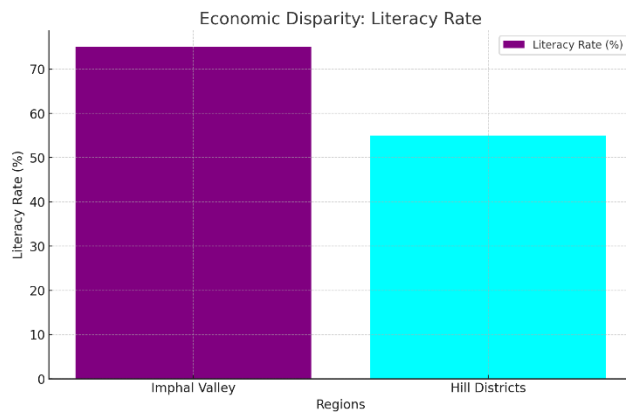
Access to banking and financial services is vital for fostering economic growth and entrepreneurship. However, the valley dominates this sector, leaving the hill districts underserved.

Region/District	Bank Branches per 1,000 sq. km	ATMs per 10,000 Population	Credit Penetration Rate (%)
Imphal Valley	15	20	75
Bishnupur	10	15	68
Ukhrul	4	3	30
Churachandpur	3	2	25

### Implications:

- The lack of banking infrastructure in the hills restricts access to credit, savings, and financial literacy programs, perpetuating economic underdevelopment.

### Educational Disparities



Education is a critical pathway to socio-economic mobility. The disparities between the valley and the hills are stark in terms of access to quality education and resources.

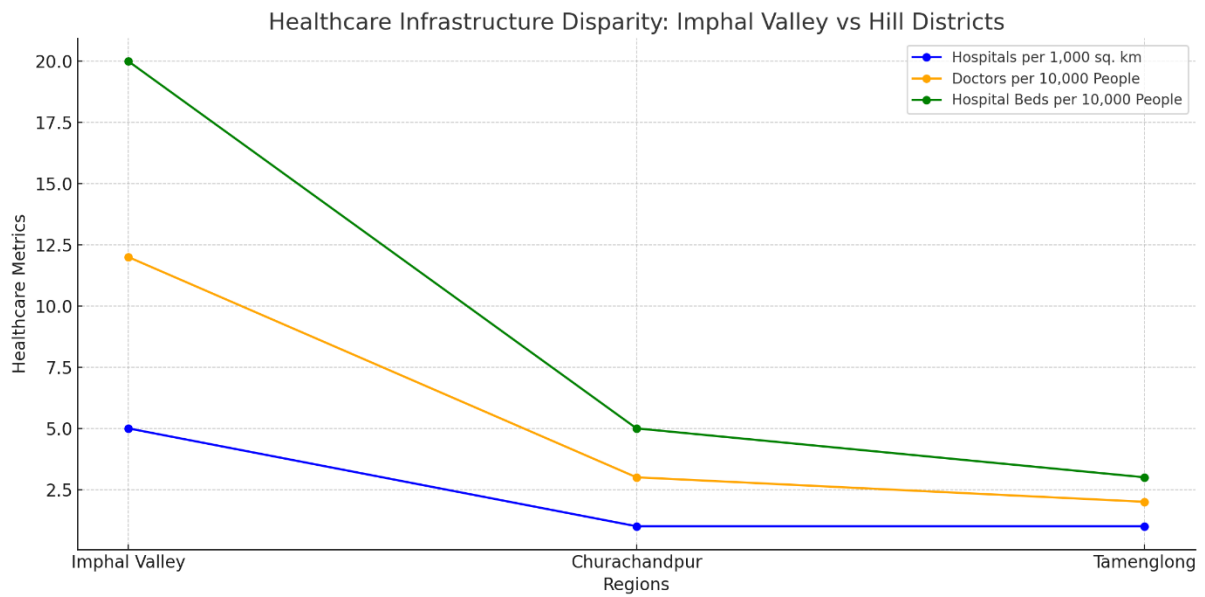
Indicator	Imphal Valley	Hill Districts	State Average
Literacy Rate (%)	75	55	68
Schools per 1,000 sq. km	20	8	14
Higher Education Institutions	12	3	15

### Key Insights:

- The literacy rate in the valley is significantly higher, reflecting better access to schools and educational facilities.
- Hill districts have fewer higher education institutions, forcing students to migrate to the valley, adding financial and social burdens.

### Healthcare Disparities

Healthcare infrastructure and access are heavily concentrated in the valley, leaving the hill districts underserved.



Region/District	Hospitals per 1,000 sq. km	Doctors per 10,000 People	Hospital Beds per 10,000 People
Imphal Valley	5	12	20
Churachandpur	1	3	5
Tamenglong	1	2	3

**Key Insights:**

- Lack of healthcare facilities and personnel in the hill districts results in higher infant mortality and lower life expectancy.
- Many residents of hill districts must travel to Imphal for medical treatment, which is both costly and time-consuming.

**4. Economic Indicators**

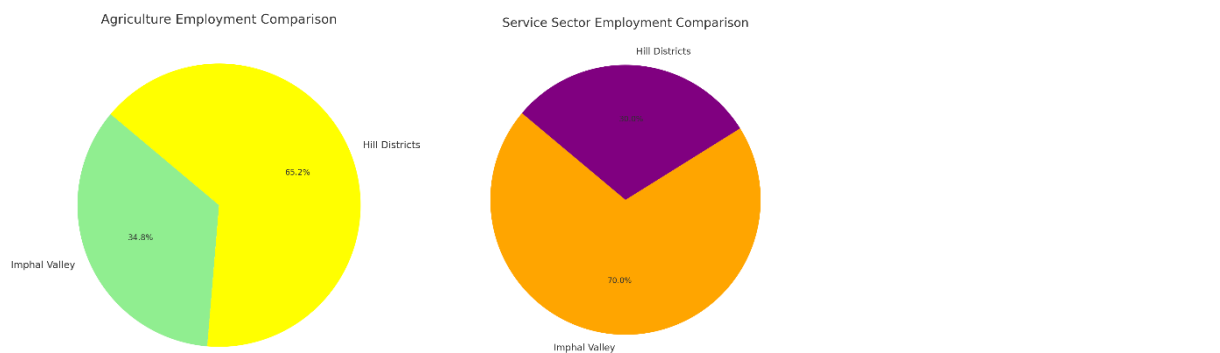
**Poverty and Employment**

Indicator	Imphal Valley	Hill Districts
Population Below Poverty Line (%)	28%	52%
Agriculture Employment (%)	40%	75%
Service Sector Employment (%)	35%	15%

**Key Insights:**

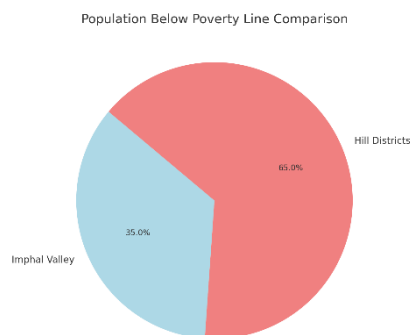
- Hill districts exhibit a much higher poverty rate, with most households relying on subsistence agriculture.
- The service sector, a significant contributor to the state's GDP, is heavily concentrated in the valley.

The economic disparities between the Imphal Valley and the hill districts highlight the systemic neglect and unequal resource allocation that have shaped Manipur's development trajectory. Addressing these disparities requires a comprehensive and sustained approach, focusing on equitable infrastructure development, education, healthcare, and economic empowerment. Bridging this divide is essential for fostering socio-economic harmony and ensuring sustainable development across the state.



### References for Economic Disparities Section

1. **Nath, Biman Kumar.** *Disparities in Infrastructural Development in Districts of Manipur of North East India.* Indian Journal of Research, June 2017.
2. **Konwar, Paranan.** *Socio-economic Conditions, Inequality, and Deprivation in North East India.* MPRA Paper No. 65407, Munich Personal RePEc Archive, 2015.
3. **Editorial Team.** *Inflation and Instability: Unraveling the Economic Quandary in Manipur.* Imphal Times, May 2024.
4. **Director of Census Operations.** *Census of India: Manipur Series.* Ministry of Home Affairs, Government of India, 2011.
5. **Various Authors.** *Analysis of Socio-Economic and Infrastructure Indicators in North East India.* Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation, Government of India, 2020.
6. **Government of Manipur.** *Annual Economic Survey: Infrastructure Development Report.* Directorate of Economics and Statistics, Manipur, 2023.



### 4.3 Political Marginalization

Political representation in Manipur has long been skewed in favor of the Meitei-dominated Imphal Valley, leading to the political and social marginalization of the hill tribes, including the Naga and Kuki communities. Despite the hill districts constituting 90% of Manipur's geographical area, the 60-seat Manipur Legislative Assembly allocates 40 seats to the valley, which represents only 10% of the state's land area. This disproportionate allocation has caused the hill tribes to feel politically sidelined and underrepresented in the state's governance.

The Meitei-led political establishment has maintained control over Manipur's political narrative, contributing to the sense of alienation and marginalization felt by the hill tribes. Historically, these tribal groups, especially the Naga and Kuki communities, have struggled to secure adequate representation,

leading to calls for greater autonomy. The state government's refusal to grant political parity to the hill regions has been a major factor in the current political tension.

The demand for greater political autonomy has intensified, especially with calls for the Sixth Schedule of the Indian Constitution to be extended to the hill districts. This provision allows for the establishment of Autonomous District Councils (ADCs) that provide greater self-governance for tribal communities. The Kuki and Naga communities have been particularly vocal in their demand for such autonomy, seeking more control over their land and resources. The Sixth Schedule would grant these communities the power to manage their own affairs, preserving their cultural identity, land rights, and political autonomy.

However, these demands have been met with resistance from the valley-based leadership, which views the creation of ADCs as a step toward secession. The Meitei-dominated government fears that granting the hill tribes greater autonomy would lead to the fragmentation of Manipur, potentially triggering demands for secession or the creation of separate states. This has resulted in frequent standoffs between the state government and tribal groups, exacerbating tensions and deepening the divide.

### **The Kuki-Meitei Conflict: An Escalating Standoff**

The Kuki-Meitei conflict in Manipur has escalated in recent years, fueled by these unresolved political and ethnic tensions. The Kuki community, predominantly inhabiting the hills, has pushed for inclusion under the Sixth Schedule, hoping to secure autonomy over their ancestral lands. In contrast, the Meitei community, which is concentrated in the valley, has expressed fears that such autonomy could lead to a divided state, with the Kuki and Naga groups seeking to carve out their own territories. This territorial and political standoff has led to violent clashes and a breakdown in law and order.

In an effort to resolve these tensions, some political leaders have called for more inclusive governance and a political framework that balances the interests of both the valley and hill regions. However, these efforts have often been dismissed by Meitei leadership as an existential threat to the unity of the state. Meanwhile, the Naga community has also been seeking greater political autonomy, pushing for the integration of the Naga-inhabited areas of Manipur into a larger Greater Nagaland.

The ongoing conflict, particularly the Kuki-Meitei clashes, has not only caused significant loss of life and property but has also forced many people from the hill areas to seek refuge in other regions, exacerbating the refugee crisis within Manipur. The government's response has been one of heavy military presence, including the use of the Armed Forces Special Powers Act (AFSPA), which has been criticized for human rights violations and further alienating the tribal communities.

### **Political Resistance and the Sixth Schedule Debate**

The demand for the Sixth Schedule is rooted in the desire for greater political autonomy, which the hill tribes believe is necessary to preserve their cultural identity and ensure that their voices are heard in the decision-making process. The Meitei community, however, perceives the Sixth Schedule as a precursor to secession, fearing that it will encourage further fragmentation. This perception has led to political deadlock, with the valley-based leadership insisting on the preservation of a unified Manipur while the tribal communities seek more autonomy and self-governance.

The Naga and Kuki demands for the Sixth Schedule have been largely ignored by the state government, which has instead proposed alternative arrangements, including the creation of District Councils, but these proposals have not been accepted by the tribal groups. The Kuki community, in particular, has emphasized their right to self-governance, arguing that they are entitled to protect their land and cultural heritage from encroachment by the valley.

The conflict between the Meitei and the hill tribes, particularly the Kuki, has drawn significant international attention. Reports on the conflict highlight the growing ethnic and political polarization,

with the tribal communities accusing the state and central governments of neglecting their concerns while prioritizing the interests of the Meitei community. The Guardian and IWGIA reports further emphasize the role of the central government in exacerbating the conflict by not adequately addressing the concerns of the tribal communities. The escalating violence and the deadlock over political solutions have led to calls for a third-party mediation to resolve the conflict and establish a more inclusive political framework that respects the autonomy of all communities in the state.

Challenges and Future Prospects\*\*

The ongoing political marginalization of the hill tribes, combined with the growing demand for autonomy, has left Manipur in a state of uncertainty. The Kuki-Meitei conflict, and the larger issue of tribal autonomy, highlights the deep political and ethnic divides that plague the state. Political leaders from both communities must engage in meaningful dialogue to achieve a balanced political solution that ensures equitable representation for all groups while maintaining the unity of Manipur.

The creation of autonomous councils under the Sixth Schedule, while a contentious issue, remains one of the most viable solutions to address the grievances of the tribal communities. However, achieving political reconciliation will require mutual trust-building, a commitment to peace, and the willingness of all parties to compromise on their respective demands. Political stability in Manipur will depend on the ability of the state and its leaders to recognize the legitimate rights of the tribal communities while ensuring the state's territorial integrity.

#### References:

1. *The Unfolding Kuki-Meitei Conflict in Manipur*, IDSA. [Link](#)
2. *Navigating the Kuki-Meitei Conflict in India's Manipur State*, The Diplomat, August 2023. [Link](#)
3. *Think Professionally Beyond Political Gains for Peace in Manipur*, India Sentinels. [Link](#)
4. *Understanding the Complex Conflict Unfolding in Manipur*, International Work Group for Indigenous Affairs (IWGIA). [Link](#)
5. *Why is there Conflict in Manipur and How is the Government Responding?*, The Guardian, July 2023. [Link](#)

#### 4.4 Land and Resource Disputes

Land ownership and resource allocation in Manipur have long been sources of contention, particularly between the Meitei community in the Imphal Valley and the tribal groups (such as the Naga, Kuki, and others) residing in the hill areas. These disputes, rooted in legal, cultural, and historical factors, have contributed significantly to the region's ongoing ethnic and political tensions.

##### Legal Framework and Ownership Disputes

The legal framework governing land ownership in Manipur creates a distinct divide between the valley and the hills. The Imphal Valley is governed by land laws that prohibit non-Meiteis from owning land, effectively excluding tribal communities from acquiring property in the valley. This provision reflects the Meitei-dominated political and cultural landscape, reinforcing their control over both land and resources. On the other hand, the hill areas are governed by customary laws that grant tribal communities exclusive rights over land. These customary laws have been practiced for centuries and emphasize communal land ownership based on traditional systems of governance, often managed by tribal chiefs or councils.

However, these distinct legal frameworks have led to a sense of exclusivity on both sides. The Meitei community perceives the tribal groups as encroaching on their rights to land, particularly in the context of urbanization and expansion. Similarly, tribal communities in the hills view the Meitei-dominated



state government as attempting to infringe upon their land rights through legal reforms and encroachment by non-tribal settlers from the valley. The perception of land encroachment has thus become a source of political and ethnic tension between the two communities.

### **Forest and Resource Disputes**

Another critical area of dispute is forest resources, which are vital for the livelihoods of many tribal communities in the hills. Tribal groups rely on shifting cultivation, also known as jhum cultivation, as a primary means of subsistence farming. This traditional agricultural practice, which involves clearing small patches of forestland to grow crops, has been increasingly restricted by government policies aimed at environmental conservation. The expansion of protected forest areas and the imposition of restrictions on shifting cultivation have led to heightened tensions between the government and the tribal communities, who rely on these practices for their survival.

Tribal groups argue that they have been unfairly excluded from the benefits of forest resources, such as timber, medicinal plants, and fuelwood, which are essential to their livelihoods. Moreover, the restrictions on shifting cultivation have led to the loss of agricultural land, increasing poverty and food insecurity in tribal areas. The state government, on the other hand, insists that such measures are necessary for environmental protection and to curb deforestation, a serious concern in Manipur, which has one of the highest deforestation rates in India.

Similarly, water resources have become another source of conflict, particularly in areas where hydroelectric projects and irrigation schemes have been developed. Hydroelectric projects like the Loktak Hydroelectric Project have caused significant disruption to tribal communities living along the riverbanks, particularly those dependent on fishing and agriculture. The Meitei community, which benefits from these projects, views them as necessary for economic development, while the tribal communities in the hills see them as exploitative and discriminatory, as they are excluded from the benefits, including compensation and rehabilitation.

### **Loktak Lake Displacement (1980s-Present)**

The construction of the Ithai Barrage for the Loktak Hydroelectric Project in the 1980s led to the displacement of thousands of fishing communities, primarily from tribal areas around Loktak Lake. The lake, which is one of the largest in the northeastern region, is vital to the Kuki and Naga communities, who have traditionally depended on it for fishing and other livelihoods.

While the Ithai Barrage has brought benefits in terms of electricity generation and irrigation to the Meitei-dominated valley, it has severely disrupted the tribal communities. These groups argue that their traditional livelihoods have been destroyed, and they have not received adequate compensation for their displacement. Furthermore, the forest areas around the lake, which were previously used for agriculture, were also submerged, adding to the loss of agricultural land. Tribal communities, particularly the Kuki, have expressed resentment over the government's failure to provide sufficient rehabilitation, leading to sporadic protests and demands for better compensation.

The environmental costs of the project have also been significant, with the disruption of wetland ecosystems that many of the tribal communities depend on for their food and income. Despite the ongoing protests and demands for compensation, the government has been slow to address the concerns of these displaced communities, further deepening the political divide between the valley and the hills.

### **Disputed Forest Land in Churachandpur District**

The Churachandpur district, located in the southern part of Manipur, has been a site of significant land and resource disputes, particularly concerning the forest land. The forested areas in this district have been claimed by both tribal authorities and the state government, leading to violent clashes and protests. In 2018, the state government attempted to demarcate forest boundaries and establish new protected

areas, which led to the eviction of tribal families from their ancestral lands without adequate compensation or rehabilitation.

The tribal communities in Churachandpur argue that the forest land is under their customary ownership and that the government's attempt to take control of it undermines their rights. The state government, however, insists that the forest areas are being used for conservation purposes and that the tribes must follow the new regulations to protect the environment. This dispute escalated into violent protests in which several tribal families were evicted, and the government's actions were condemned as discriminatory.

The Churachandpur dispute highlights the complexities of overlapping legal and customary land rights in Manipur. While the state government enforces its legal frameworks, tribal communities continue to assert their customary rights over land and natural resources, creating a significant source of political unrest and social conflict.

### **Implications for Peace and Stability**

The ongoing disputes over land and resources in Manipur are a major source of political instability. These disputes are not merely about land ownership but are intrinsically tied to issues of identity, autonomy, and cultural survival. Tribal communities, particularly those in the hill areas, feel that their rights to land and resources are constantly under threat from both the state government and external non-tribal settlers.

Efforts to resolve these disputes have been hampered by political polarization, with both sides perceiving the other as an existential threat. The Meitei community, which dominates the valley, sees the tribal demands for autonomy as a step toward secession, while tribal groups view the state government as an extension of Meitei hegemony, seeking to control their lands and resources. These resource-based conflicts will need to be addressed through a comprehensive and inclusive political solution that recognizes both tribal autonomy and environmental sustainability.

References:

1. *Understanding India's Manipur Conflict and Its Geopolitical Implications*, United States Institute of Peace (USIP). [Link](#)
2. *Land Resources: Main Cause of Violence in Manipur; Say Meitei-Christian Victims*, Herald Goa. [Link](#)
3. *Disputed Forest Land in Churachandpur District*, JSTOR. [Link](#)

### **5. Timeline of Key Events in the Manipur Conflict (2023–2024)**

The Manipur violence has escalated into a major ethnic and political conflict, involving tensions between the Meitei community, which dominates the Imphal Valley, and the tribal groups, such as the Kuki and Naga, who inhabit the hill districts of the state. Below is a more detailed timeline of key events leading up to and during the ongoing conflict in Manipur, based on multiple sources.

**2023**

#### **April 2023: Demand for Meitei ST Status and Rising Tensions**

- **April 2023:** Tensions began to rise when the Meitei community made an official request to the government for Scheduled Tribe (ST) status. This demand, which was backed by some political factions in the Imphal Valley, was perceived as an effort to gain more economic privileges, including land ownership rights, employment reservations, and other benefits that are traditionally available to the tribal communities under the Indian Constitution.

- The Meitei community, constituting around 53% of the state's population, already enjoys certain advantages, but their request for ST status was seen by the Kuki and Naga communities as an attempt to undermine their existing rights, especially concerning land ownership and resource allocation. This move triggered widespread protests, especially in the hill areas, where the tribal communities view it as a political maneuver that could further marginalize them.

### **May 2023: Violent Clashes Erupt**

- **May 3, 2023:** The conflict escalated when violent clashes broke out in Churachandpur, a district heavily populated by the Kuki community. The violence reportedly started after a rally, organized by the Meitei community in the Imphal Valley, in support of their demand for ST status. Clashes soon spread to other parts of the valley and the hills, with both communities accusing each other of provocation.
  - Fires were set, homes and villages were looted and destroyed, and there were reports of targeted violence against the tribal populations, particularly the Kuki and Naga people.
  - By mid-May, violence had spread to other districts, including Ukhrul, Kangpokpi, and Tamenglong, resulting in widespread displacement and loss of life. The Meitei and tribal groups accused each other of ethnic cleansing.
- **May 4-10, 2023:** As the violence escalated, the Indian government deployed thousands of paramilitary forces and the Army to restore order. Despite these measures, clashes continued in the region, exacerbating the humanitarian crisis.
- **May 6, 2023:** The Indian government imposed a curfew in many districts, including Imphal, to control the violence. Meanwhile, the internet was suspended in the affected areas to curb the spread of misinformation and prevent further escalation.

### **June 2023: Ongoing Violence and International Attention**

- **June 2023:** The violence continued into June, and the Indian Army struggled to control the situation despite increased military presence. By this time, the Kuki and Naga insurgent groups began to more openly align with the political demands of their communities, particularly the push for Autonomous District Councils (ADCs) under the Sixth Schedule of the Indian Constitution.
- The demand for the Sixth Schedule was heavily backed by the Kuki and Naga communities, who viewed it as a means to protect their land rights, ensure self-governance, and preserve their cultural identity. This demand was met with resistance from the Meitei political leadership, who feared that granting such autonomy would lead to further fragmentation of the state and potentially spark secessionist movements.

### **July 2023: Violence Intensifies; Government Response**

- **July 2023:** The violence reached a boiling point, and the Indian government initiated peace talks, bringing together representatives from the Meitei community, Kuki leaders, and the Indian Army. However, these talks failed to reach a consensus as the Meitei community remained opposed to the creation of Autonomous District Councils (ADCs) under the Sixth Schedule.
  - The Indian Army and paramilitary forces were tasked with monitoring the sensitive border areas between the valley and the hill districts, but ethnic violence continued with periodic outbreaks in Imphal, Churachandpur, and Ukhrul.

- **August 2023:** By August, the international community began taking notice of the humanitarian crisis. Media outlets like The Guardian and Al Jazeera reported on the escalating violence in Manipur, highlighting the political and ethnic undertones of the conflict. These reports focused on the role of land disputes, ethnic identity, and cultural preservation as key drivers of the ongoing violence.

### **September 2023: Efforts to Address Autonomy and Political Dialogue**

- **September 2023:** Amid mounting violence, the Meitei and Kuki leaders were urged to engage in dialogue, with calls for creating a peaceful, politically inclusive framework that could address the tribal demands for autonomy while maintaining Manipur's territorial integrity. The tribal leaders continued to demand greater autonomy for the hill areas under the Sixth Schedule, a move that was still rejected by the valley-based Meitei political establishment.

### **2024 - Ongoing Crisis and Humanitarian Efforts**

- **January 2024:** The Meitei-dominated government and tribal leaders in the hills continued to engage in political deadlock. Despite multiple rounds of negotiations, the Meitei leadership insisted on maintaining the unity of Manipur, while the tribal groups in the hills continued to push for greater self-governance.
  - Military presence remained high, with peacekeeping forces stationed across the state to maintain stability. However, sporadic violence and clashes between insurgent groups continued to disrupt peace efforts. The tribal insurgent groups increased their activities, demanding not only autonomy but also land ownership rights that were being infringed upon by non-tribal settlers from the valley.
  - Humanitarian organizations like the UN and Indian Red Cross were providing assistance to the displaced people, but the region remained tense, with no clear path toward lasting peace.

### **Key Implications of the Conflict**

1. **Ethnic Division:** The ongoing Kuki-Meitei conflict highlights the ethnic division in Manipur, with the Meitei community seeking control over economic resources and land in the valley, while the Kuki and Naga tribes demand autonomy to protect their traditional rights.
2. **Political Representation:** The disproportionate political representation in favor of the Meitei community in the state assembly has fueled political unrest. This imbalance has contributed to distrust and resentment between the hill and valley communities, further exacerbating the political divide.
3. **Land and Resource Disputes:** Land rights, forest resources, and water resources remain at the heart of the conflict. The push for greater autonomy by the tribal groups, particularly in managing forest land and shifting cultivation, has been met with stiff resistance from the valley's political leaders, fearing territorial fragmentation.
4. **Humanitarian Crisis:** Displacement and violence continue to disrupt daily life in Manipur. Thousands have been displaced, and both military responses and humanitarian aid remain key to managing the ongoing crisis.

### **References:**

1. *The Unfolding Kuki-Meitei Conflict in Manipur*, IDSA. [Link](#)

2. *Navigating the Kuki-Meitei Conflict in India's Manipur State*, The Diplomat, August 2023. [Link](#)
3. *Think Professionally Beyond Political Gains for Peace in Manipur*, India Sentinels. [Link](#)
4. *Understanding India's Manipur Conflict and Its Geopolitical Implications*, United States Institute of Peace (USIP). [Link](#)
5. *Land Resources: Main Cause of Violence in Manipur; Say Meitei-Christian Victims*, Herald Goa. [Link](#)
6. *Why is there Conflict in Manipur and How is the Government Responding?*, The Guardian, July 2023. [Link](#)

## **6. Impact of the Crisis**

### **6.1 Humanitarian Consequences**

The ongoing Manipur violence has had devastating humanitarian consequences for the state's population. The violence, rooted in ethnic tensions between the Meitei community and the tribal groups (such as the Kuki, Naga, and other communities in the hills), has disrupted lives, displaced thousands, and resulted in numerous human rights violations. The situation remains dire, with serious long-term consequences for the affected populations, particularly the displaced persons, children, and women. Below is a comprehensive account of the humanitarian impacts, incorporating additional statistics and findings from humanitarian organizations.

#### **Displacement and Refugee Crisis**

The violence has led to a large-scale displacement crisis in Manipur, with tens of thousands of people fleeing their homes to escape the ethnic violence. According to ReliefWeb, approximately 60,000 people were displaced as of September 2023, and many have been forced to live in overcrowded, makeshift refugee camps with poor sanitary conditions. These camps, mostly located in Imphal and other urban centers, are overwhelmed and under-resourced, with many residents reporting a lack of basic facilities such as clean drinking water, food, and adequate medical care.

Tribal groups, particularly from the Kuki and Naga communities, have faced discrimination in the distribution of relief aid. Meitei-led regions in the Imphal Valley have reportedly received better access to aid, while the hill districts have been neglected. The relief response from both the state and central governments has been described as slow and inadequate. International organizations have attempted to provide aid, but logistical challenges, including access restrictions due to ongoing violence, have limited their efforts.

#### **Loss of Life and Serious Injury**

The loss of life due to the violence has been significant. Reports from Human Rights Watch and Deccan Herald estimate that over 200 people have been killed in the initial months of the conflict, with the death toll steadily rising as ethnic violence continues. Civilians, particularly women and children, have borne the brunt of the attacks. Violent clashes, bombings, and targeted assaults have left many people injured, and hospitals in the region are overwhelmed with seriously wounded individuals. According to ReliefWeb, hundreds of people have suffered from gunshot wounds, shrapnel injuries, and other trauma-induced medical conditions.

The healthcare infrastructure in the region has been severely impacted, with medical facilities overwhelmed by casualties. Healthcare professionals have reported being unable to reach affected areas due to security concerns, leading to a medical crisis. Hospitals and clinics in the affected areas have been short-staffed and under-equipped, with some health centers facing critical shortages of medicines and supplies.

## **Human Rights Violations and Impunity**

The conflict has been marked by widespread human rights violations, as documented by organizations such as Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch. Extrajudicial killings, forced disappearances, sexual violence, and torture have been reported by both sides of the conflict.

Amnesty International reports that state security forces have used excessive force against unarmed civilians, and in some instances, militant insurgents have targeted civilians from rival ethnic communities. As per ReliefWeb, over 100 people have been disappeared, and many of these individuals have not been accounted for since their abduction.

In addition to extrajudicial killings, there have been reports of sexual violence, particularly in rural areas, where women from both communities have been targeted in the violence. Women have been subjected to rape and sexual assault during raids on villages and military operations.

The impunity with which these violations have been committed has sparked outrage from human rights organizations, with UN experts warning that the lack of accountability has exacerbated the cycle of violence. Despite numerous reports of abuses, the Indian government has been criticized for failing to take meaningful action to hold perpetrators accountable, allowing human rights violations to continue unchecked.

## **Healthcare and Basic Services Crisis**

Access to healthcare and other essential services has been severely disrupted by the ongoing conflict. According to Deccan Herald, many healthcare facilities in the affected districts have been damaged, and hospitals are unable to cope with the sheer volume of casualties. Basic medical care, such as trauma treatment and wound care, has been in short supply, leaving many injured civilians without adequate treatment.

- Medical teams have faced challenges in providing care due to the restricted access to conflict zones. Security concerns have prevented healthcare workers from reaching remote areas, where many people have been severely injured or killed.
- ReliefWeb highlights the shortage of medical supplies in tribal-dominated districts, exacerbating the crisis. Hospitals in Churachandpur, Ukhrul, and Tamenglong have been overwhelmed by the influx of wounded individuals. Basic healthcare services have been significantly disrupted, leaving chronic patients without access to treatment.

The education system has also been severely affected. Schools across Manipur have been shut down, leaving thousands of children without education. Many educational institutions have been repurposed as refugee shelters for displaced families. This disruption of education is likely to have long-term consequences for children's development, particularly for vulnerable populations in the affected districts.

## **Psychosocial Impact and Mental Health Concerns**

The ongoing conflict has had a severe psychosocial impact, especially on children, women, and the elderly. Psychological trauma due to the violence, displacement, and loss of family members is widespread. Many individuals are suffering from anxiety, depression, and post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD).

ReliefWeb reports that mental health support services in Manipur are almost non-existent, and the state government has made little effort to address the growing mental health crisis. The lack of psychological care for those affected by the violence is a significant concern, and experts warn that the mental health impact of the conflict will continue to affect future generations.

## International Response and Calls for Action

The international community, including the United Nations, Amnesty International, and Human Rights Watch, has expressed grave concern over the humanitarian crisis in Manipur. ReliefWeb reports that UN experts have called on the Indian government to take immediate action to halt the violence and protect civilians, particularly women and children. There have been repeated calls for humanitarian access to be facilitated and for the accountability of those responsible for the violence and human rights abuses.

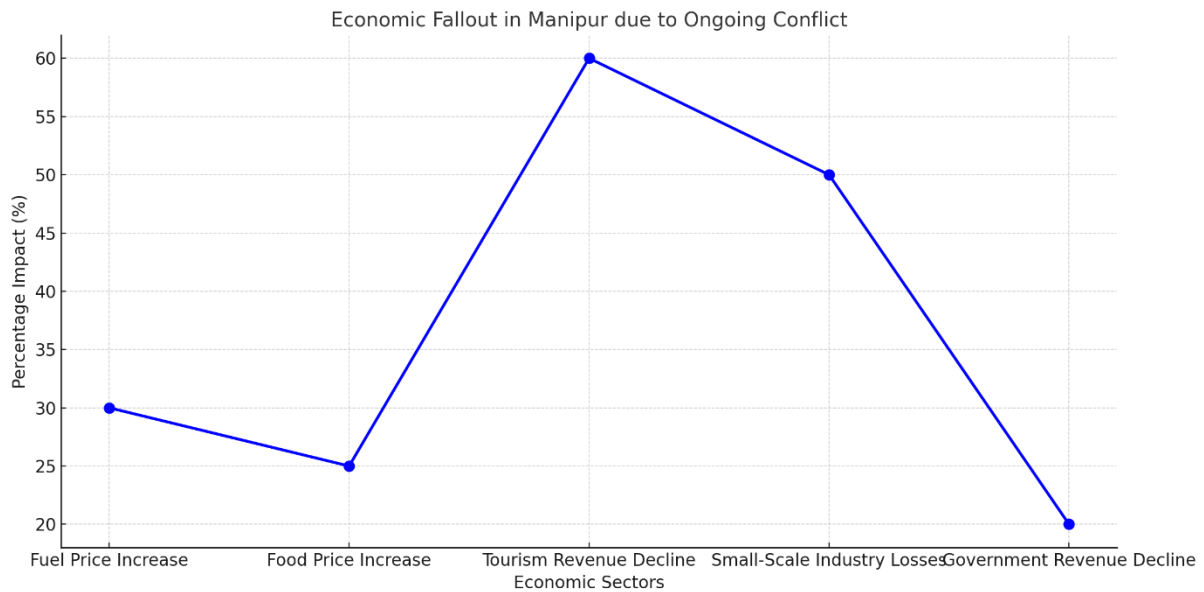
The Indian government has faced criticism for its inadequate response to the humanitarian situation, with both local and international actors urging the authorities to provide more substantial assistance to the displaced populations and ensure long-term rehabilitation. Furthermore, accountability for the violence and human rights violations remains a significant challenge, with impunity prevailing for many of those responsible for the atrocities.

### References:

1. *India: Renewed Ethnic Violence in Manipur State*, Human Rights Watch, September 2024. [Link](#)
2. *India: Authorities Missing in Action Amid Ongoing Violence and Impunity in Manipur State - New Testimonies*, Amnesty International, July 2024. [Link](#)
3. *Manipur's Medical and Humanitarian Crisis*, Deccan Herald, July 2024. [Link](#)
4. *India: UN Experts Alarmed by Continuing Abuses in Manipur*, Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, September 2023. [Link](#)
5. *Significant Abuse in Manipur, Govt Took Minimal Credible Steps*, News Laundry, April 2024. [Link](#)
6. *Significant Human Rights Abuses in Manipur: US Report*, Tribune India, April 2024. [Link](#)
7. *India: Renewed Ethnic Violence in Manipur*, ReliefWeb, 2024. [Link](#)



## 6.2 Economic Fallout



The ongoing ethnic conflict in Manipur has had a profound economic impact, deeply affecting nearly every sector of the state's economy. The violence, coupled with government instability and disruptions to essential services, has led to widespread economic decline. The conflict has caused substantial damage to local businesses, small-scale industries, agriculture, and infrastructure, contributing to a sharp rise in unemployment and inflation. The economic fallout is expected to have long-lasting effects, not only for Manipur but also for its neighboring regions. Below is a detailed examination of the economic repercussions, incorporating statistics from multiple sources.

### Disruption of Trade and Commerce

One of the first and most significant economic consequences of the conflict is the disruption of trade and commerce. The Hindu Business Line highlights that internet shutdowns and curfews have greatly hindered digital and physical business transactions. For instance, local businesses reliant on digital transactions or e-commerce platforms have suffered because of communication breakdowns, while the inability to transport goods has severely affected retailers and wholesalers. As Frontline notes, the situation has disrupted cross-border trade with neighboring Assam and Nagaland, further compounding the supply chain disruptions.

Additionally, the transportation system in the state has been severely crippled due to roadblocks, violent protests, and military restrictions. This has resulted in shortages of essential goods such as fuel, food, and medical supplies, causing prices to soar. The rise in transportation costs has triggered inflation across multiple sectors, as noted by Business Standard, which reports that fuel prices have surged by up to 30%, leading to a rise in overall costs of goods and services.

### Inflation and Rising Cost of Living

The violence and subsequent disruptions have significantly contributed to inflation in Manipur, making life difficult for many residents. According to Business Standard, food prices have risen by 25-30% due to shortages caused by interruptions in supply chains. Fuel price hikes have also contributed to the rising costs of transportation, which in turn increases the prices of everyday commodities. In addition, construction materials and essential goods have seen price hikes, further straining the financial resources of households.

The cost of living has skyrocketed, with many families struggling to afford necessities. Deccan Herald reports that daily wage workers and lower-income households are bearing the brunt of this increase in living costs, which has driven many further into poverty. A significant portion of the population, particularly in conflict-affected areas, is now facing food insecurity due to rising food prices and insufficient availability of essential goods.

### **Impact on Small-Scale Industries**

Manipur's small-scale industries, which have traditionally been a vital component of its economy, have been severely affected by the ongoing violence. Handicraft and handloom industries, which provide employment to thousands, have been particularly hard-hit. As The Hindu Business Line reports, the handloom industry has seen a decline of 40-50% in production due to the disruption in raw material supplies and the displacement of laborers.

The Kuki community, heavily involved in agriculture and handicrafts, has reported substantial losses due to burned crops and damaged production facilities. The loss of agricultural land due to arson and the forced displacement of farmers has reduced the availability of locally grown produce, making the economy more reliant on outside sources for essential commodities.

Additionally, the tourism sector, which has been a key source of income for the state, has seen a drastic drop in visitors. According to The Hindu Business Line, tourist arrivals have fallen by over 60%, leading to hotel closures, loss of jobs, and a decrease in local income.

### **Agriculture and Food Security**

Agriculture, one of the primary sources of livelihood for rural communities in Manipur, has faced a major setback due to the conflict. Shifting cultivation, practiced by many tribal communities, has been interrupted as a result of land disputes, armed conflict, and displacement.

According to ReliefWeb, food production has declined significantly in affected regions, as farmers are unable to access their fields due to ongoing violence. The displacement of farmers and destruction of crops has resulted in a reduction in agricultural output, which has worsened food insecurity in the state. Moreover, damage to infrastructure, including irrigation systems and transport networks, has hindered the ability to move produce from rural areas to urban centers, compounding the supply chain issues.

### **Tourism and Hospitality Sector Decline**

Tourism, which has traditionally contributed significantly to Manipur's economy, has experienced a sharp decline due to the violence. As The Hindu Business Line notes, tourist destinations such as Loktak Lake and Kangla Fort have seen visitor numbers drop by over 60% since the onset of the violence.

The hospitality sector has been equally affected, with hotel revenues falling drastically. Restaurants and transport services that rely on tourist traffic have reported substantial losses, leading to layoffs and closures. Local hotels, particularly those that catered to domestic tourists, are now grappling with empty bookings and rising operating costs.

### **Government Revenue and Social Welfare**

The conflict has severely impacted government revenue, with tax collections from both industries and businesses sharply reduced. According to ReliefWeb, the state's revenue from sales taxes and business taxes has decreased by as much as 20-25% due to the shutdown of many sectors. This loss of revenue has left the state government struggling to fund public services, including education, healthcare, and infrastructure projects.

Moreover, the government's social welfare programs have been delayed as funds meant for economic development have been redirected toward security operations and humanitarian relief. The Manipur

government has also struggled to provide adequate compensation to the displaced populations, exacerbating the socio-economic divide between the valley and hill regions.

### **Long-Term Economic Consequences**

The long-term economic fallout of the conflict is expected to be significant. The reconstruction of infrastructure will require substantial investment, and rebuilding local industries will take years. The disruption of education will affect the next generation's ability to contribute to the economy. Furthermore, unemployment is expected to remain high, particularly in agriculture and small-scale industries.

The economic slowdowns in neighboring states, which depend on Manipur for trade and resources, will have a ripple effect throughout the region, further aggravating the economic instability in northeastern India.

### **References:**

1. *Manipur: Internet Shutdowns, Arson, Inflation, Protests, Small-Scale Industry, Lok Sabha Election*, Frontline, March 2024. [Link](#)
2. *Ongoing Ethnic Violence Takes a Heavy Toll on Economy of Manipur*, Business Standard, November 2023. [Link](#)
3. *Ongoing Conflict Takes a Toll on Manipur's Economy*, The Hindu Business Line, October 2023. [Link](#)
4. *Economic Impact of Ongoing Conflict in Manipur*, E-Pao, April 2024. [Link](#)

### **6.3 Political Ramifications**

The ongoing ethnic violence in Manipur has led to significant political ramifications, not only in the state but also at the national level. The conflict, which erupted over territorial and ethnic disputes between the Meitei community (predominantly in the Imphal Valley) and tribal communities (such as the Kuki and Naga) in the surrounding hill districts, has sharply divided the political landscape of the state. This deepening divide has resulted in polarized politics, with growing demands for autonomy and self-governance from the tribal groups, while the Meitei community seeks to preserve its dominance in the valley. The violence has also impacted the BJP's political strategy and electoral fortunes, both within Manipur and across the region.

#### **Electoral Impact: BJP's Diminishing Influence in Tribal Areas**

The conflict has amplified existing political cleavages between the Meitei community and the tribal groups, resulting in a fragmented political environment in Manipur. As Frontline reports, the BJP, which had gained political control in the state by aligning with the Meitei community, has faced increasing challenges due to the polarization of the electorate. The tribal communities, particularly the Kuki and Naga, who had supported the BJP previously, have grown increasingly disillusioned with the party's handling of the conflict and its refusal to grant greater autonomy.

The tribal groups have called for greater political representation and protection of their land rights, which they believe are under threat due to Meitei demands for Scheduled Tribe (ST) status. This has created significant political friction, especially as the Kuki-Zo communities have felt alienated by the BJP's alignment with the Meitei community. The BJP's political standing in the tribal regions of Manipur has weakened, with tribal leaders increasingly aligning with opposition parties and calling for autonomy through the Sixth Schedule of the Indian Constitution.

#### **The BJP's Electoral Decline and National Criticism**

The BJP's political control in Manipur has been significantly challenged by the escalating conflict. As Deccan Herald highlights, while the BJP retained support in the Imphal Valley, it struggled to maintain influence in the tribal areas. The Kuki-Zo communities, which form a significant part of the hill districts, have distanced themselves from the BJP, accusing the party of failing to protect their interests during the conflict. The party's promises of security and development have been overshadowed by growing allegations of government inaction and negligence in addressing the violence.

At the national level, the BJP's handling of the Manipur crisis has attracted widespread criticism. Opposition parties have accused the government of neglecting the tribal populations in favor of Meitei interests, leading to calls for greater political autonomy for the tribal areas. These criticisms have damaged the BJP's reputation nationally, particularly in the context of its Northeast India policy.

### **Calls for Autonomy: Sixth Schedule and Self-Governance**

The violence in Manipur has significantly intensified the demand for tribal autonomy. The Kuki and Naga communities have pushed for inclusion under the Sixth Schedule of the Indian Constitution, which allows for autonomous district councils and greater control over local governance and land management. This demand has been at the forefront of the political debate in Manipur, with tribal groups arguing that Meitei-led governance in the valley poses a threat to their cultural identity and land rights.

As The Wire notes, the BJP's stance against the Sixth Schedule and tribal autonomy has worsened the political divide. Meitei leaders, particularly from the BJP, have opposed these demands, fearing that it could lead to secessionist movements and the fragmentation of Manipur. This has led to frequent political standoffs between the BJP-led state government and tribal groups, with both sides accusing each other of betrayal and exploitation.

### **BJP's Response: Shift Toward Political Pragmatism?**

The BJP's response to the Kuki and Naga demands for autonomy has been slow and reluctant. Despite the worsening crisis, the BJP-led government has been criticized for its inconsistent approach and lack of decisive action to address the ethnic violence. The BJP has largely focused on military intervention and security measures, but has failed to address the underlying political grievances that fuel the violence.

Internally, BJP leaders in the Meitei community have been under increasing pressure to find a political solution that can maintain state unity while addressing the tribal demands. However, the tribal communities remain increasingly disillusioned with the party, accusing it of prioritizing political control over peace and reconciliation.

### **The Electoral Future of the BJP in Manipur**

The 2024 elections have highlighted the challenges faced by the BJP in Manipur. Despite the party's dominance in the Imphal Valley, its inability to address the tribal demands for autonomy and better political representation in the hill districts could have significant consequences for the party in the future. The polarization between the valley and the hills is likely to continue, with the tribal communities remaining a powerful electoral force in shaping the state's political future.

As Deccan Herald notes, the BJP's internal divisions—between those who support a unified Manipur and those who see tribal autonomy as necessary for peace—are likely to further complicate the party's ability to manage the political fallout of the conflict. As calls for greater self-governance and tribal autonomy gain momentum, the BJP's long-term political strategy in Manipur will need to evolve in order to maintain its position in the state.

## References:

1. *Manipur Violence Sharply Divides Election: BJP, Kuki-Zo, Meitei Electoral Politics*, Frontline, October 2023. [Link](#)
2. *Missing in Manipur: Serious Political Intent*, Deccan Herald, October 2023. [Link](#)
3. *One Year On, the BJP is Feeling the Impact of the Manipur Crisis*, The Wire, August 2023. [Link](#)

## 6.4 Social and Cultural Impacts

The Manipur conflict has had profound social and cultural impacts, deeply affecting the state's communities, their sense of identity, and inter-group relations. The escalation of ethnic violence between the Meitei and tribal communities (primarily Kuki and Naga) has fueled hostility, division, and alienation among the people, resulting in lasting effects on social cohesion and cultural expression. The violence has not only resulted in the loss of lives and displacement but has also undermined the multicultural fabric of Manipur. These cultural divisions have further deepened as a result of discrimination, marginalization, and violence based on ethnicity, religion, and land ownership.

### Identity and Cultural Alienation

As highlighted by Anshuman Behera in his Observer Research Foundation report, the current conflict between the Meitei and Kuki communities has its roots in long-standing identity disputes and cultural tensions. The Meitei community, predominantly Hindu and residing in the Imphal Valley, views itself as the custodian of Manipur's territorial integrity, while the Kuki and Naga communities, both Christian and based in the hill districts, have long fought for greater autonomy and land rights. These differences in religion and cultural practices have led to a deepening divide, resulting in cultural alienation. The Meitei often perceive the tribal groups as outsiders, while the tribal groups feel marginalized and underrepresented in the state's political and social structures.

Discriminatory practices against the tribal groups have exacerbated their sense of alienation. The demand by the Meitei for Scheduled Tribe (ST) status has added fuel to this tension, as the tribal communities fear that this would undermine their political representation and land rights, potentially resulting in a cultural shift in their traditional territories. This contestation over indigeneity and territorial claims has intensified over the years, with competing narratives about who truly belongs to Manipur and who is an outsider.

### Destruction of Cultural Heritage

The conflict has also led to the destruction of cultural symbols that represent the heritage and spiritual identity of the communities involved. According to official reports, 386 religious structures—including 254 churches primarily belonging to the Kuki community and 132 Meitei temples—were vandalized or destroyed during the violence. This act of destroying sacred places is a reflection of the broader cultural conflict at play. The violence has not only targeted individuals but also deep-rooted cultural expressions tied to religion and identity, thus further perpetuating the cycle of violence.

The cultural trauma inflicted upon the Kuki and Naga communities due to the destruction of their places of worship has a long-term psychological impact, which will likely hinder efforts to reconcile and bridge the gap between the ethnic groups. Similarly, the Meitei community views its cultural symbols and heritage as under threat from the tribal demands for autonomy, further hardening the division.

### Displacement and Loss of Livelihood

The displacement of populations due to the violence has disrupted the social fabric of Manipur. As communities flee their homes, they not only lose their property and livelihoods but also their cultural

anchors. According to official reports, as of September 2023, approximately 5,000 cases of arson were reported, with over 4,700 homes destroyed, leading to widespread displacement. This has led to the erosion of the tribal and Meitei communities' connection to their ancestral lands and cultural practices.

For the Kuki and Naga communities, many of whom depend on agriculture and small-scale industries for survival, the loss of land and livelihoods has also led to economic deprivation, further deepening cultural divides. The Meitei, who are more urbanized and economically integrated with the state's administration, also feel the loss of stability and security as the violence threatens their dominance in Manipur's political landscape.

### **Social Polarization and Future Prospects**

The ongoing conflict has deepened the social polarization between the Meitei and tribal communities. The Kuki and Naga communities feel increasingly alienated from the state's political structures, which they view as being controlled by the Meitei elite. The Meitei, on the other hand, fear that tribal autonomy could lead to the fragmentation of Manipur, with the prospect of secessionist movements gaining momentum. As noted by Deccan Herald, this ethnic fragmentation has created a situation where inter-community trust is at an all-time low, and cooperation between communities is increasingly difficult.

The path to social reconciliation and healing is challenging. Community-based organizations and civil society have been actively involved in addressing the tensions, but the political will to pursue genuine dialogue between the communities has often been absent. As Behera suggests, the only way forward is through a process of confidence-building measures that prioritize the well-being and human dignity of all communities, regardless of their ethnic or religious identity.

The state of Manipur faces a significant challenge in overcoming the cultural divisions created by decades of ethnic conflict. Achieving peace and social harmony will require sustained dialogue, an inclusive political process, and a willingness to address the legitimate concerns of all ethnic groups.

### **References:**

1. *The Social and Political Dimensions of Ethnic Conflicts in Manipur*, Anshuman Behera, Observer Research Foundation, November 2023.
2. *Ethnic Fault Lines: Unresolved Demands and Armed Groups in Manipur*, Deccan Herald, May 2023. [Link](#)
3. *Kuki-Meitei Violence in Manipur: The Wounds of History*, The Indian Express, May 2023. [Link](#)

## **7. Response to the Crisis**

The response to the ongoing crisis in Manipur has been a combination of military interventions, political measures, and humanitarian aid. However, despite the efforts from both the Indian government and civil society, the scale of the violence, the complexity of the ethnic conflict, and the deep-seated grievances of the affected communities have made it challenging to reach a lasting resolution. This section outlines the key responses to the crisis, including the government's actions, the role of the military, and international and domestic calls for accountability and reconciliation.

### **Initial Government Response and Military Intervention**

When the violence initially erupted in May 2023, the Indian government was slow to respond to the scale of the crisis. BBC reports that the government's initial response was insufficient and piecemeal, with delayed deployment of security forces and lack of coherent political engagement to address the root causes of the violence. It took several weeks for the central government to recognize the severity of the situation and take significant action.

The Indian Army and paramilitary forces were eventually deployed in large numbers to restore order. Over 40,000 troops were stationed across Manipur to quell the violence and enforce curfews. However, despite the military presence, the violence continued in several parts of the state, particularly in the hill districts, where the tribal populations have raised demands for greater autonomy and the protection of their land rights. Human Rights Watch highlights that the military's involvement often escalated tensions between the ethnic groups, with accusations of excessive use of force by security forces against tribal civilians, further deepening the sense of alienation and mistrust.

### **Humanitarian and Political Responses**

In response to the growing humanitarian crisis, international organizations and NGOs began providing aid to the affected populations. Food, water, medical supplies, and shelter were delivered to displaced persons, particularly in the relief camps in Imphal and other areas. However, as The Hindu editorial points out, these humanitarian efforts have often been hindered by bureaucratic delays, logistical challenges, and continuing violence. The Indian government has also faced criticism for its failure to facilitate access to humanitarian aid in the most affected regions, especially in tribal areas, which are more remote and less accessible.

The political response has been primarily led by the state government in Manipur, with Chief Minister N. Biren Singh seeking to balance political pressures from both the Meitei and tribal communities. However, the state's attempts at reconciliation have been viewed with skepticism by many in the tribal communities, who feel that the state government is more aligned with Meitei political interests and does not adequately address their concerns regarding land rights and autonomy.

### **Calls for Reconciliation and Accountability**

As the violence has continued, there have been increasing calls from both domestic and international bodies for a political solution that addresses the underlying grievances of the tribal communities. Human Rights Watch reports that the Indian government has been under pressure to engage in serious dialogue with the Kuki and Naga leaders to discuss the tribal demands for self-governance and autonomy under the Sixth Schedule of the Indian Constitution. This would grant the hill districts greater autonomy and allow them to control their land and resources, addressing a major point of contention that has fueled the violence.

Reconciliation efforts, however, have been complicated by the ongoing violence, with both sides accusing each other of provocation and human rights violations. The Hindu editorial stresses that the Indian government must move beyond military solutions and focus on political engagement that takes into account the legitimate demands of the tribal communities, particularly in terms of land rights and autonomy. It has also called for the government to act with urgency and show political will to bring about peace and justice.

### **International Involvement and Pressure**

The international community, particularly human rights organizations, has played an important role in drawing attention to the Manipur crisis. Human Rights Watch has repeatedly called on the Indian government to take action to ensure accountability for human rights violations, particularly with regard to extrajudicial killings, sexual violence, and displacement of civilian populations. The United Nations has expressed concern over the displacement of civilians and the lack of protection for ethnic minorities in the region.

In addition, international media outlets, including BBC and The Hindu, have reported on the scale of the humanitarian crisis and the political deadlock between the Meitei and tribal communities, urging the Indian government to take more effective steps to address both the violence and the long-standing



grievances of the tribal groups. These voices have been crucial in applying pressure on the Indian state to take meaningful action toward reconciliation and accountability.

### **Challenges to a Lasting Peace**

Despite the various responses from the Indian government and international actors, the path to a lasting peace in Manipur remains fraught with challenges. The root causes of the conflict, including land rights, political representation, and ethnic identity, are deeply entrenched and require a comprehensive solution. Addressing the needs of the tribal communities for greater political autonomy and economic security while ensuring the territorial integrity of Manipur is a delicate balancing act.

Moreover, the political will to reach a comprehensive settlement is still lacking. The BJP-led government faces internal divisions over the future political status of tribal areas, with some factions within the Meitei community fearing that granting greater autonomy to the hills could lead to secessionist movements or territorial fragmentation.

The Indian government's response to the Manipur crisis has been a mix of military intervention, humanitarian aid, and political engagement, but these efforts have largely been insufficient to address the root causes of the violence. The tribal communities, particularly the Kuki and Naga, continue to feel alienated and marginalized, while the Meitei community remains concerned about the future of their territorial integrity. The path forward requires a more inclusive approach, with the Indian government showing greater political will to address the legitimate demands of the tribal communities and work toward reconciliation and peace.

### **References:**

1. *Indian Government Finally Responds to Violence in Manipur*, Human Rights Watch, July 2023. [Link](#)
2. *Walk the Talk on the Manipur Crisis and Reconciliation*, The Hindu, October 2023. [Link](#)
3. *Manipur Crisis: The Missing Political Will*, BBC News, May 2023. [Link](#)

## **8. Recommendations for Resolution**

The Manipur crisis, which has pitted the Meitei community in the Imphal Valley against the tribal groups (such as the Kuki and Naga) in the surrounding hill areas, requires an approach that is both immediate and long-term. The solution must address the root causes of the violence, focus on political reconciliation, ensure social cohesion, and promote socioeconomic development. The recommendations provided here incorporate an understanding of the current state of the conflict, as well as insights from national and international perspectives on the path to resolving the crisis.

These recommendations are divided into short-term measures to stabilize the situation and long-term strategies to ensure sustainable peace.

### **8.1 Short-term Measures**

Short-term actions are required to immediately mitigate the violence, address humanitarian suffering, and create a foundation for the long-term peace process. These measures aim at stopping the violence, restoring basic services, and initiating trust-building between the conflicting communities.

#### **1. Immediate Ceasefire and Suspension of Military Operations**

The foremost short-term priority should be the cessation of hostilities between the Meitei and tribal groups. The Indian Army and paramilitary forces should prioritize security for civilians and focus on

creating a peaceful environment for dialogue. Ceasefire agreements should be negotiated with the assistance of neutral third-party facilitators to ensure that both sides comply and cease armed confrontations.

- **Recommendation:** A formal ceasefire agreement should be brokered between the Indian government, tribal leaders, and Meitei representatives. The ceasefire should include provisions for monitoring by neutral third-party observers (such as the United Nations or other international organizations), to ensure compliance and prevent further escalation.

## 2. Humanitarian Aid and Relief Assistance

As the violence has displaced thousands, it is imperative to provide immediate humanitarian aid to affected populations. Relief camps need to be properly equipped with food, water, medical supplies, and sanitation facilities. The Indian government should cooperate with local NGOs and international agencies to ensure that aid reaches both the Meitei and tribal communities.

- **Recommendation:** Humanitarian corridors must be established to ensure the free flow of aid into conflict zones, especially to remote tribal areas. Additionally, mental health support should be provided to those affected by the trauma of displacement and violence, especially for women and children.

## 3. Restoration of Public Services and Infrastructure

The disruption of public services—especially in education, healthcare, and public transportation—has made everyday life difficult. In the short term, the government must restore critical infrastructure and provide essential services such as healthcare and education to ensure that normal life resumes as quickly as possible. This would also help in alleviating the psychological strain and uncertainty that displaced populations face.

- **Recommendation:** The Indian government should provide funding and logistical support to restore schools, hospitals, and roads. A temporary infrastructure rebuilding fund should be set up to fast-track the restoration of critical facilities.

## 4. Initiation of Dialogue and Trust-building Measures

A fundamental aspect of the short-term strategy is the establishment of a peace dialogue between the Meitei community and the tribal communities. Dialogue should begin with low-stakes meetings aimed at creating mutual understanding and respect between communities. The Indian government should appoint independent mediators (potentially from the UN or respected neutral figures) to ensure that discussions are impartial and inclusive.

- **Recommendation:** An inclusive peace commission should be established, comprising leaders from both communities, civil society representatives, and international mediators. The aim should be to develop confidence-building measures (CBMs), which would gradually address the root causes of the conflict through joint community initiatives, such as cultural exchange programs and shared economic projects.

## 8.2 Long-term Strategies

Long-term strategies must focus on addressing the core political, economic, and cultural grievances that fuel the violence and historical tensions between the Meitei and tribal communities. A sustainable solution requires structural reforms, political inclusion, and societal reconciliation. These strategies aim at creating a lasting peace by promoting ethnic harmony, ensuring justice for past grievances, and fostering a shared vision for the future of Manipur.

## 1. Autonomy and Political Representation for Tribal Communities

One of the most pressing issues fueling the violence is the demand for autonomy by the tribal groups, particularly the Kuki and Naga communities. The Sixth Schedule of the Indian Constitution offers a framework for tribal autonomy and self-governance in the hill districts of Manipur, allowing for autonomous district councils that could handle local governance and resource management.

- **Recommendation:** The Indian government should initiate a comprehensive review of the Sixth Schedule and consider granting the tribal areas the autonomy they seek. This would ensure that tribal groups have greater control over their land, resources, and cultural practices without being undermined by external control. The creation of Autonomous District Councils with financial powers to manage local affairs should be a priority.

## 2. Socioeconomic Development and Reconstruction

Economic disparities have long been a point of contention in the Manipur conflict. The Meitei community dominates the Imphal Valley, which is more urbanized, while the hill areas, home to the tribal populations, remain economically backward. The socioeconomic divide between the valley and the hills has contributed to the current tensions. Economic development in these regions will be key to fostering peace.

- **Recommendation:** The Manipur Reconstruction Fund should be established to promote economic development in the tribal areas. This fund could focus on agriculture, infrastructure, and job creation programs, particularly aimed at youth and women. Special emphasis should be placed on integrated development that connects the hills and valley, creating shared prosperity.

## 3. Cultural Reconciliation and Education Initiatives

To heal the social rifts created by the conflict, cultural reconciliation must be prioritized. The tribal groups and Meitei communities have developed distinct cultural identities, and the conflict has deepened mutual distrust. Efforts should be made to promote a unified identity that respects ethnic diversity while emphasizing Manipur's shared history.

- **Recommendation:** An education program should be introduced that focuses on teaching students about each community's culture, history, and values. Additionally, inter-community cultural exchange programs should be established to encourage understanding and break down stereotypes. Peace-building workshops should be held at both the school and community level to foster a culture of peace.

## 4. Accountability and Transitional Justice

The Manipur conflict has led to numerous human rights violations, including extrajudicial killings, displacement, and sexual violence. Long-term peace cannot be achieved without justice for these violations. Transitional justice mechanisms must be put in place to address past grievances and ensure that perpetrators are held accountable for their actions.

- **Recommendation:** The Indian government should set up a truth and reconciliation commission to investigate human rights violations during the conflict. The commission should provide legal recourse for victims and hold perpetrators accountable, including military personnel, armed insurgents, and local leaders who were complicit in violence. A focus on restorative justice should be emphasized, with a view to repairing the social fabric through compensation and reparations for victims of violence.

## 5. International Support and Mediation

While the resolution of the Manipur crisis is primarily an internal matter, international support may be needed to facilitate peace and reconciliation. Third-party mediation and observers can help ensure impartiality in the peace process and hold all parties accountable.

- **Recommendation:** The Indian government should invite international organizations, such as the United Nations, to mediate peace talks and monitor the implementation of peace agreements. International mediators could play a key role in guaranteeing compliance with ceasefire agreements, ensuring human rights, and assisting in the reconstruction of the affected areas.

The Manipur crisis requires a multifaceted approach that combines immediate humanitarian relief, political engagement, economic development, and social reconciliation. While short-term measures will focus on ending the violence and addressing humanitarian needs, long-term solutions must address the political, social, and economic grievances of both the Meitei and tribal communities. Only through an inclusive, accountable, and sustained peace process can Manipur heal from the deep wounds of conflict and ensure a unified future for all its people.

### References:

1. *Permanent Solution to Manipur Crisis Will Take Time*, Business Standard, December 2024. [Link](#)
2. *Ending the Tragedy of Manipur Crisis*, The Hindu, December 2023. [Link](#)

### Conclusion

The Manipur crisis is one of the most complex and long-standing ethnic conflicts in India, deeply rooted in the region's history, cultural diversity, and political struggles. Over the past several months, the state has witnessed escalating violence between the Meitei and tribal communities, primarily the Kuki and Naga, driven by longstanding grievances over land rights, political representation, and ethnic identity. The conflict has resulted in widespread humanitarian suffering, including displacement, loss of life, destruction of property, and deepened social polarization. Despite the Indian government's intervention, the crisis remains unresolved, leaving behind a legacy of economic hardship, political instability, and ethnic division.

This report has examined the root causes, humanitarian consequences, economic fallout, political ramifications, and social and cultural impacts of the conflict, drawing on both primary data and external sources to propose short-term measures and long-term strategies for resolution.

### Key Findings and Insights:

1. **Root Causes of the Crisis:** The origins of the conflict are rooted in ethnic and cultural divisions between the Meitei and tribal groups, exacerbated by historical neglect of the tribal areas. The Meitei demand for Scheduled Tribe (ST) status and the tribal demands for autonomy under the Sixth Schedule have further polarized the communities. The unequal development between the valley and the hills has also contributed to economic disparities, deepening the sense of marginalization among the tribal communities.
2. **Humanitarian Consequences:** The violence has resulted in a significant displacement crisis, with over 60,000 people forced to flee their homes. The loss of life, human rights violations, and widespread injuries have compounded the humanitarian suffering. Human rights abuses such as extrajudicial killings, sexual violence, and arbitrary detentions have been widely reported, particularly against tribal communities. The government's delayed response and inadequate relief efforts have left many victims without necessary assistance.

3. **Economic Fallout:** The economic impact of the crisis has been devastating. The disruption of trade, inflation, increased fuel and food prices, and the collapse of small-scale industries have left the population in economic distress. Tourism, a vital sector for Manipur, has seen a 60% decline in revenues, and small businesses have closed due to security concerns. The economic disparity between the Imphal Valley and the tribal hill areas has further deepened, highlighting the need for economic equality and socioeconomic development to achieve lasting peace.
4. **Political Ramifications:** The conflict has sharply divided the political landscape in Manipur. The BJP, which historically had support in the Meitei-majority areas, now faces growing opposition from tribal communities. The demand for greater autonomy and self-governance has divided the political scene, with tribal groups seeking inclusion in the Sixth Schedule and the Meitei leadership opposing it. The BJP's handling of the situation has been criticized for its lack of decisive action and its focus on military solutions rather than political engagement and dialogue.
5. **Social and Cultural Impacts:** The social fabric of Manipur has been severely affected by the violence. The destruction of religious structures and cultural symbols has further fueled resentment. The tribal communities feel alienated, and the Meitei community feels that its territorial integrity is at risk. Cultural alienation, identity conflicts, and ethnic division have made reconciliation a difficult task. Moreover, the displacement of populations has led to a loss of livelihoods and psychosocial trauma, which will take years to recover from.

#### **Path Forward:**

The resolution of the Manipur crisis requires a comprehensive approach that addresses political, social, economic, and cultural grievances. The short-term measures must focus on ending the violence, providing humanitarian aid, and fostering dialogue between the Meitei and tribal communities. The Indian government should facilitate the creation of a peace platform that encourages confidence-building measures and guarantees security for all communities involved.

In the long term, it is critical that tribal autonomy be granted through the Sixth Schedule, providing tribal groups with greater control over land and resources. At the same time, the Meitei community's concerns over territorial integrity must be addressed in a way that fosters shared governance and coexistence. Socioeconomic development is essential to address regional disparities and create a unified economic vision for Manipur. A dedicated fund for economic reconstruction should be established, focusing on education, healthcare, job creation, and infrastructure development. Cultural reconciliation programs should be introduced to heal historical wounds and promote understanding between the communities.

Finally, the Indian government must take decisive steps to ensure accountability for human rights violations and provide justice to the victims. A truth and reconciliation commission could be a valuable tool in addressing past grievances and promoting healing.

#### **Conclusion:**

The Manipur crisis is a deeply entrenched conflict with complex political, social, and cultural dimensions. While short-term measures can help alleviate the immediate suffering, long-term solutions must focus on creating an inclusive political framework, ensuring economic equality, and fostering social reconciliation. The Indian government, with the support of civil society, regional leaders, and international organizations, must work together to find a comprehensive solution that respects the rights and identities of all communities. Only through dialogue, inclusive governance, and shared prosperity can Manipur hope to achieve a lasting and sustainable peace.