



Healing Manipur: Navigating the Path to Reconciliation

The extension of President's Rule in Manipur for another six months reflects the ongoing struggle to find a durable solution to the ethnic conflict that has divided the state. While administrative measures have brought a fragile calm, the deeper work of reconciliation between communities remains a critical challenge.



President's Rule: A Rare but Necessary Measure

Historical Context

The imposition of President's Rule, once a frequent and politically motivated tool of the Centre, has declined considerably since the 1990s due to the S.R. Bommai judgment, rising influence of regional parties, and public revulsion to its misuse.

Current Application

In recent years, President's Rule has become rare, reserved for genuine constitutional breakdown or severe internal security challenges, such as the situation in Manipur.

Manipur Extension

On Friday, President's Rule was extended in Manipur by another six months, from August 13, with few contesting this decision given the ongoing ethnic tensions.

Signs of Progress Amid Continuing Challenges

Following the resignation of N. Biren Singh and the fall of the BJP government, there has been a discernible but fragile calm in Manipur. A crackdown on militant groups that had operated with impunity has reduced open violence, and some families displaced since May 2023 have begun to return home.

However, these positive developments are overshadowed by the unbridled and deep-seated ethnic schism between the Kuki-Zo and Meitei communities.





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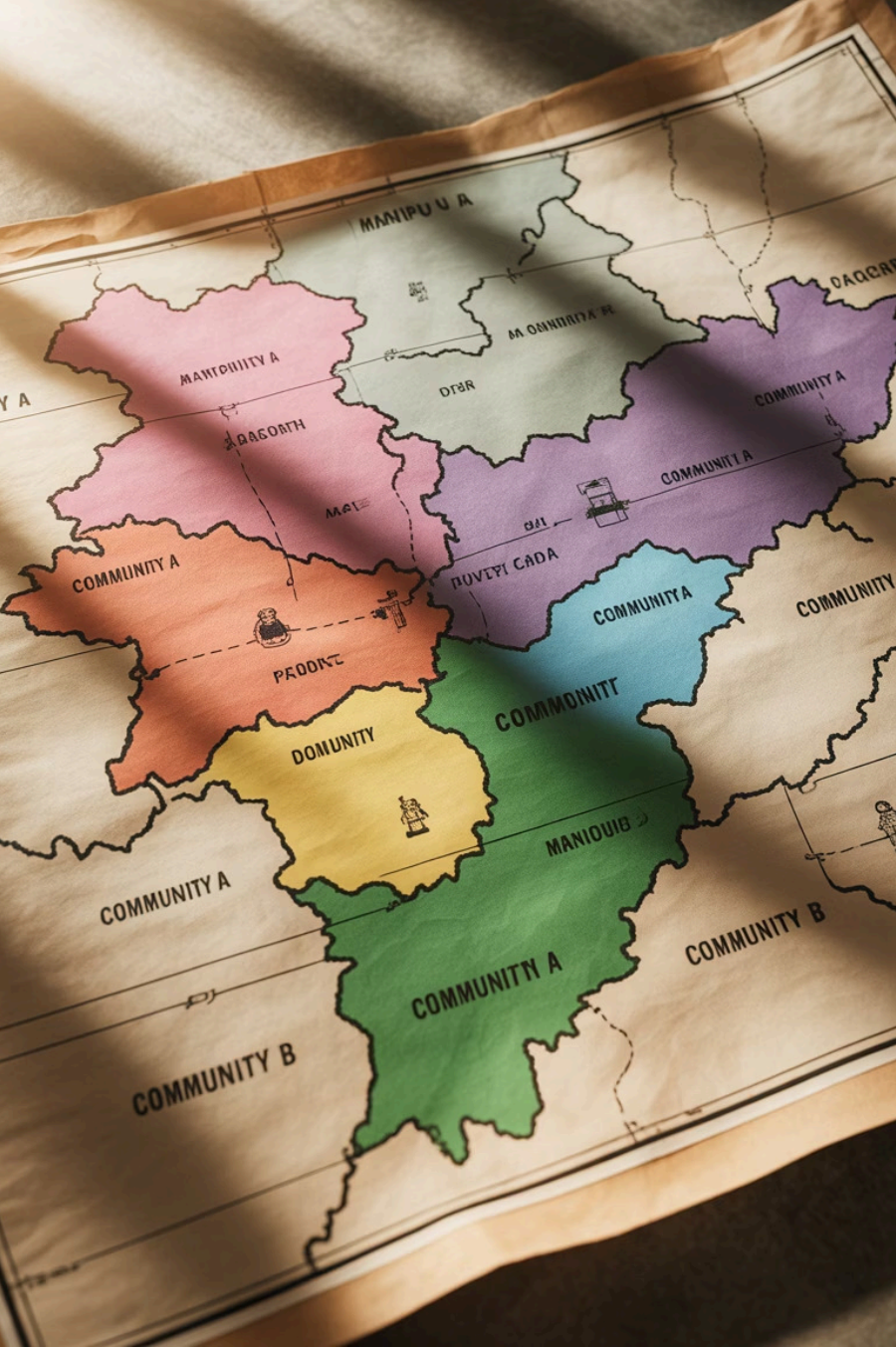
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The Divided Landscape of Manipur

1

Physical Division

The landscape of Manipur is still carved up by buffer zones, rigidly segregating communities, creating physical barriers to reconciliation.

2

Political Chasm

Kuki-Zo groups are resolute in their demand for a separate administration, while hardline Meitei organisations persist with a narrative that brands fellow citizens as "outsiders".

3

Administrative Challenges

Governance has become increasingly difficult with communities unwilling to accept administration by officials from the other community.

Administrative Measures for Peace



De-weaponisation

Administrative steps that reiterate de-weaponisation must continue to reduce the potential for violence.



Defanging Militant Groups

Efforts to neutralize militant groups acting for ethnic interests will break their aura of impunity.



Empowering Moderates

These measures will encourage moderates to raise their voices for reconciliation, countering hardline narratives.

During Mr. Singh's tenure, prominent civil society activists seeking to halt the conflict by critiquing the biased nature of governance were hounded, silencing important voices for peace.

Beyond Administrative Solutions: The Political Dimension

Administrative measures to improve the rule of law must be supplemented by political gestures. The BJP enjoyed support in both the valley and the hills when it was elected, but has been unable to bridge the ethnic hostility.

This is largely because the party's national leadership has shown little inclination to treat the issue urgently, leaving it to civil servants and security forces to tackle the problem.





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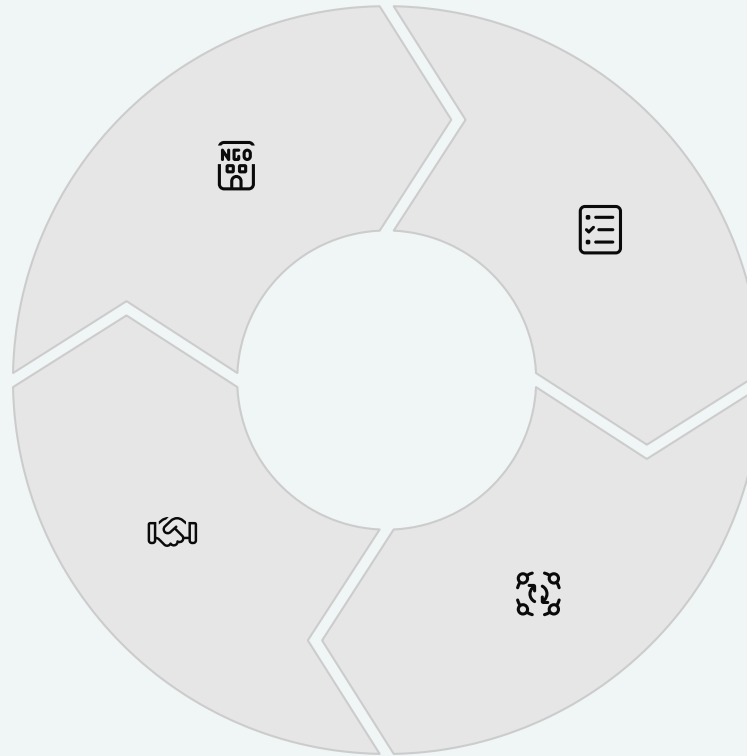
Shared Responsibility for Reconciliation

Centre's Role

The Centre's responsibility is to foster political conditions to bridge the ethnic divide, going beyond security measures.

Community Leaders

Traditional and religious leaders must use their influence to promote dialogue and understanding.



Political Parties

Political parties must defy hardliners and begin the painstaking work of reconciliation across ethnic lines.

Civil Society

Civil society groups have a crucial role in building bridges between communities and advocating for peaceful coexistence.



The Path Forward: Genuine Healing

While the continuation of President's Rule might seem inevitable in Manipur, its success should not be measured by the absence of violence alone.

The future of a peaceful Manipur will be written by the initiative of committed political actors willing to transcend ethnic divisions and work toward the genuine healing of their fractured society.

This requires courage from all stakeholders to challenge hardline positions, create spaces for dialogue, and rebuild trust between communities that have lived together for centuries.

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