

Selective Outrage, Selective Targeting

The Politics of Othering in Manipur

THONGKHOLAL HAOKIP

The politics of othering that has emerged from the war on drugs and the emergent forest policy in Manipur is discussed. While the war on drugs is not only anachronistic in its approach but also selective in its outrage, the forest policy is mainly the re-manifestation of the old colonial interest of enclosing the commons and establishing complete state control over the forests. This renewed attempt at reservation of forests has been selective in its target, thereby engulfing the state once again into the long-drawn ethnic politics, leading to further marginalisation of the hill communities.

On 4 March 2023, all members of the Manipur Legislative Assembly unanimously undertook a resolution and declared themselves as “warriors” of the “war on drugs.”¹ Armed with the adoption of the global “war on drugs” campaign as a slogan, the Manipur government has been fighting the menace of drug trafficking and illicit poppy cultivation in the state since 2018. Linking rampant illicit poppy cultivation to deforestation and encroachment of reserved forests, protected forests, and wildlife sanctuaries, the state government also launched a drive to evict alleged encroachers. This allegation of encroachment arises only after an order that set aside the exclusion of villages in the large swathe of mountainous forests from the proposed protected forests four decades back. However, these attempts ended up being selective in its outrage in the war on drugs and in targeting who would be evicted.

The prevalence of the drugs menace in Manipur is largely due to the durable political disorder and economic backwardness in the state, coupled with its proximity to the Golden Triangle and enduring political turmoil in Myanmar. The long and porous border with Myanmar, its only neighbouring country—riddled with poor governance, durable armed conflicts, and general indigence—is not effectively monitored. This proximity to the Golden Triangle—a mountainous area of Myanmar, Laos, and Thailand which is regarded as one of the world’s largest opium-producing areas—and Manipur being a natural gateway is one of the preferred routes for both legal and illegal trade and transport. The problem of drug trafficking has never subsided in this border state over the decades. Indeed, the Golden Triangle can be literally extended

to include Manipur hills as an opium-producing area today due to large-scale poppy plantations in the last two decades.

Uneven Development and Illicit Cultivation

In the discourse on uneven geographical development, capital is said to produce “the real spatial scales” of uneven development, which “is social inequality blazoned into the geographical landscape,” and the simultaneous “exploitation of that geographical unevenness for certain socially determined ends” (Smith 2008: 7, 206). Though Smith explores the geography of capitalism to unravel spatial inequality, this framework is useful for understanding politics in economically dependent states in India with a geographical binary of the urban valley and the rural hinterland in the hills. This capital, in the case of special category states in India, is the “grants” that come annually from the union government due to the non-viable nature of state finances, and in the case of Manipur, it is 90% of the annual budget.² These grants are controlled by maintaining the status quo to the existing political and financial institutions of the state. Furthermore, there is a stark difference between the proposed budget and spending in all departments between the hills and the valley, where the proposals are high and the actual spending abysmally low for the hills. For instance, in the Department of Forests and Environment, the proposal for 2017–18 was ₹40.85 crore for the hills and ₹70.90 crore for the valley. The expenditure actually incurred was ₹19 crore for the hills and ₹66 crore for the valley. This is a department where more than 90% of the forests are located in the hills. On average, all budgets in the hills had less than 50% of actual spending.³

While developing a theoretical model of economic backwardness, Acemoglu and Robinson (2006: 115) explore the tendency of ethnic groups and political elites to block institutional development because of a “political replacement effect.” The anxiety over this effect is high, wherein “political elites will block beneficial economic

Thongkhola Haokip (th.robort@yahoo.co.in) teaches at the Centre for the Study of Law and Governance, Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi.

and institutional change when they are afraid that these changes will destabilise the existing system and make it more likely that they will lose political power and future rents.” In financially unviable states like Manipur, this is achieved through opposition to delimitation in the state and demand for inclusion of autonomous district councils in the Sixth Schedule (Haokip 2022). Left in the lurch from enjoying the developmental pie and the increasing gap of uneven development, the long-standing economic marginalisation forced many in the hills to resort to illicit poppy cultivation. It is an alternative livelihood for those who have been left out of trickle-down benefits from the “capital” infused from New Delhi. Moreover, the soils in the hills are mostly acidic and “are not suitable for plant growth” and the felling of trees in areas of swidden cultivations, and timber and firewood “have been affecting seriously the ecological balance of the [hill] area[s].”⁴

Of Drugs and Feigned Ignorance

The Special Cell of the Delhi Police on 17 February 2023 nabbed two “key supplier[s] of international narco drug cartel” and recovered from the duo “50 kgs [of] opium, worth more than 10 crore in international market, [which] was brought from Manipur.”⁵ When this news reached Manipur, the state Congress party vociferously demanded a Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) inquiry (Morning Bell 2023a). The demand was mainly to uncover the larger potential racket in this drug haul and address the problem of rampant drug trafficking in the state, even among those in political power as certain cases earlier had indicated.

Since he came to power in 2017, Manipur Chief Minister N Biren Singh attempted to end the illicit poppy cultivation and drug trafficking in the state. The “war on drugs” that was launched during his earlier tenure has been continued with renewed vigour in the second term. As a part of this commitment, he posted on his social media handles about the nabbing of drug peddlers and details of contraband substances seized and also about the destruction of poppy cultivation sites day in and day out, in addition to the police department doing the same.

Notwithstanding these claims, he was not only conspicuously putting the Delhi drug haul case under the rug by avoiding posting on social media but was silent on the demand by the state’s Congress party for a CBI inquiry into the case. There were several reminders by concerned social media users about the Delhi drug haul case in response to his feigned ignorance despite the chief minister being known to reply often to those who interact with him on other issues. The flagrant obliviousness in certain cases, yet quick, vocal and elaborate responses in other cases, is a crass exhibition of bias and selective outrage.

In Manipur, the linkage between drug trafficking and insurgency is well established.⁶ However, the linkage between politicians and drug trafficking is yet to be properly explored and studied, despite being frequently discussed, debated, and reported in the media. Notwithstanding this, one of the top priorities of the state government is to end the endemic problem of drug trafficking and illicit poppy cultivation. In the past, religious organisations urged the state government to provide alternative livelihoods to poppy farmers. The problem of poppy cultivation in the hills of Manipur is largely a crisis of agriculture (Haokip 2020) and mostly a result of neglect. In his study, Kipgen (2019) claims that poppy farmers “are hitherto excluded from development initiatives in the state” and argues that “the fight against opium poppy production in Manipur can be won only if economically viable alternatives are provided to farmers.” While questioning the efficacy of direct compensation schemes, Sangpui and Kapngaihlian (2021) pointed out that the state government “promised to provide compensation to those farmers whose crop (poppy) was destroyed during the police raid,” yet “when farmers visited the concerned office to claim the compensation, they were tagged as ‘kaani victims.’” They made it clear that this kind of stereotypical categorisation “has made them uneasy as it is offensive to them.” During the course of time, there emerged a binary, of “those who want to see the state provid[ing] alternative means of livelihood, and those who want total

elimination of illicit poppy cultivation with the use of brute force.” And “such views” are now “almost neatly run along ethnic lines, thereby exacerbating division” (Haokip 2021: 11). Several studies around the world have indicated that there is a “huge damage wrought on poor and marginalised communities by the war on drugs” (Meehan 2021).

The initial approach of the United Nations (UN) to address illicit cultivation shifted from crop substitution in the 1970s to integrated rural development in the 1980s, which “aimed at improving the overall quality of life of the target population by addressing not only income but also education, health, infrastructure and social services” of the cultivators (UNDCP 1993: 1). This “broader rural development approach was required to address the factors driving cultivation in illicit drug economies, the lack of marketing infrastructure, public services, and agricultural know-how” (UNDOC 2015: 80).

Enclosure of the Commons

When colonial forestry began in India during the late 18th century, “forests were increasingly viewed as an asset of the state with great commercial potential” (Poffenberger and Singh 1996: 58), which the first Forest Act in 1865 mainly facilitated the acquisition of certain forest areas to the state (Gadgil and Guha 1992: 108). This intention is what Gadgil and Guha (1992: 109) call “annexationist” during the debate on the formulation of the Forest Act, 1878, which “held out for nothing less than total state control over all forest areas.” Thus “the predominant thrust of the colonial forest department was towards appropriation and centralisation of forest resources to serve the needs of an expanding capitalist economy” (Sundar 2000: 257). On the contrary, the populists’ view totally opposed state interference and were in favour of giving exclusive right of forests to the peasants. Besides these two extreme and totally opposite views, there were pragmatists who argued for state control of ecologically sensitive forests and leaving the rest to village communities. Even a century and a half later, as seen in the case of Manipur, the two extreme positions on forests—the annexationists and populists—continue.

When a special order was issued by the forest department of the Manipur government on 7 November 2022, setting aside the orders passed in objection cases by the then assistant settlement officer (ASO) between 1971 and 1988, which excluded villages and their lands from the proposed protected forests and reserved forests, suddenly many tribal residents in the hills became encroachers or trespassers. It claimed that “orders passed in the objection cases” about four decades back were “technically imperfect, defective, erroneous and unacceptable,” and hence the whole forest areas are “property of the Government of Manipur and the State government has proprietary rights to the whole of the forest produce.” Thus eviction drives were carried out by the state’s forest department after 37 years. This is in contradiction to the established tenet of India’s tribal policy which restricts “imposing anything on them” by not over-administering tribal territory, and specifically seeks to respect their “rights in land and forests”; however the evictions were carried out through the brute force of state power.⁷ Furthermore, the coincidence of the eviction drives with water stress months exacerbated the problems, and the blame of such emergent circumstances also went to various illicit and traditional farming practices in the hills, something the lowland states have become historically accustomed to.

What is conspicuous in this case is that among 36 reserved forests and 22 protected forests in 14 forest divisions in Manipur, the state government is particular about certain forest divisions such as Kangpokpi and Churachandpur districts and was made the target of eviction drives. In order to give more teeth to the forest department, the forest guards are newly equipped with arms. As per reports on 7 March 2023, forest guards of six forest divisions of the state are trained at the Manipur Police Training College, Pangei, for arms handling and operation (Morning Bell 2023b). These are in contradiction to the National Forest Policy of 1988 which attempts to associate tribal people in joint forest management along with forest officials. The joint forest management is based on mutual trust

and defined roles and responsibilities for each of them. The policy goes on to the extent of conferring tribals with certain ownership rights over trees and vesting the rights of felling trees to tribal institutions. This selective targeting also corresponds to ethnicity. As the government is now entangled in these selective biases, it will be hard to engage the aggrieved tribal communities in joint forest management programmes in the future. The whole effort to achieve sustainable forest management will be difficult as various studies in other parts of the world have shown that community-led forest management helps in maintaining and recovering sustainable forest cover.

The said office memorandum on 7 November 2022 by the forest department cited the decision of the state cabinet to appoint authority “to recommend measures for rehabilitation/relocation”; however, such relocation and rehabilitation measures were never carried out when villagers in K Songjang in the Churachandpur district were evicted on 20 February 2023. Instead, during the eviction, metal sheet roofings and logs of the dismantled houses were even confiscated. Apart from the historical injustice of evicting them from their habitat, they were not even given any form of restorative justice that is needed if they are alleged to be encroachers. Contrary to the quagmire in Manipur recently, about two decades back, the Ministry of Environment and Forests on 21 December 2004 issued a letter to all states and union territories recognising the “traditional rights of tribals on forest lands,” Regarding this, the ministry said,

no effective steps were taken (since independence) to simultaneously settle the rights of tribals and other forests dwellers. Absence of records of rights which never existed for these people, became the main constraint in resolving this issue. As a result, the rural people, especially tribals and forest dwellers who have been living in the forest since time immemorial, have come to be erroneously looked upon as encroachers of forest lands.

Despite such an advisory, the continued discriminatory treatment lies at the heart of the ongoing political unrest in the hills of Manipur.

As per Section 4(3) of the Indian Forest Act, 1927, the state government is given

the power to appoint officers for the said purpose in which “one of whom shall be a person holding any forest-office ... to perform the duties of a Forest Settlement-officer under this Act.” In the absence of the forest settlement officer (FSO), it was the ASO that was the competent authority to decide as per the provision in Section 4(3) of the said act. The Forest Act is wrongly weaponised to dispossess tribals of their land and forest. It demonstrated how the dominant agenda is bulldozed through state power. The 2023 amendments to the Forest (Conservation) Act, 1980, made the forest-dependent tribal communities living within 100 kilometres from international borders more precarious of their forestlands, whose lands can be confiscated in the name of constructing “strategic linear projects of national importance,” “security related infrastructure,” and “defence related project or a camp for paramilitary forces or public utility projects.”

Unfairness and Legitimate Expectations

These new grounds of review are unfair to the hill communities as they owned the land and forests for more than a century. To them, the “cancellation of orders for setting aside forest areas in favour of different village(s)” lacks legitimate expectations, legal certainty, and is devoid of the principles of natural justice. Regarding this, Elliott (2003: 71) observes that “The principles of legitimate expectation and estoppel, which entitle individuals to rely upon official practice and statements, are rooted in notions of fairness and legal certainty, and serve to promote public trust in governmental institutions and the quality of public administration.” Thus “it remains possible in exceptional circumstances to invoke promissory or proprietary estoppel against public authorities” (Bamforth 1998: 196). Even if the “ASOs were not authorised or empowered to exclude the lands from PF (protected forest),” the “binding effect of unauthorised representations remains a possibility” (Elliott 2003: 74). As in the case of English jurisprudence, “the older cases had invoked estoppel principles because ‘the public law concepts of abuse of power and legitimate expectation

were very undeveloped and no doubt the analogy of estoppel seemed useful” (Elliott 2003: 76). Hence, the cases fall within “a very limited exception to the principle of legality” in the operation of estoppel. In India, the evolving doctrine of legitimate expectation, as Jain and Deshpande (2019: 72, 63) claim, “is one of the founding values under guarding rights against arbitrary administrative actions and due process of law.” It “can be invoked as an interpretive standard as well as to concretise the abstract language of fundamental rights in part III of the Indian Constitution.”

Protests and Ethnic Othering

To protest against such unfairness and discriminatory treatment, peaceful rallies were organised on 10 March 2023 by student and community-based organisations in Churachandpur, Kangpokpi, and Tengenpual districts. However, the state government issued prohibitory orders in the districts despite India’s constitutional guarantee of the right to assemble peacefully. In defiance of the prohibitory orders, the peaceful public protests were accomplished in front of, what Scott (1990: 18) calls, “the intimidating gaze of power.” These public protests signify their non-acceptance to the enclosure of their forests. The state government, instead of bringing some understanding to the predicament of the hill people, only increased the process of othering. As Alon and Omer (2006: ix) aptly discuss the negative spiralling in conflicting situations: “the harsher the conflict, the more we tend to demonize the opponent,” the main intention of othering is to exclude and demonise them and is driven politically and promoted by hegemonic institutions in the state.

When the protestors are collectively demonised as “poppy planters and forest encroachers” and illegal immigrants, it becomes much easier for the government to evict them from their lands.⁸ Such brazen stereotypical representation was evident when the chief minister said, in an interview with Northeast Live television on 10 March 2023: “these people are encroaching everywhere. The indigenous communities are cooperating with the government and only few

illegal immigrants wanted to expand poppy plantation and drug business.” Powell asserted that “demographics play a crucial role in the process of othering,” and the political instability in Myanmar and the influx of Myanmarese in the border areas of Manipur is adding fuel to the fire, and it is “used to divide and dehumanise groups and capture and reshape government and institutions.” As in the case of United States during the Donald Trump regime, “the rhetoric and language coming from” Manipur’s chief minister “has begun to both define and normalise othering.” His language now “not only activates people’s anxiety and fear around a perceived other, it creates new processes of exclusion and dehumanization” (Powell 2017).

The engagement in stereotyping and demonisation process arises out of the reluctance to recognise economic backwardness and abject poverty in the hills that led to illicit crop cultivation. It reaffirms the anxiety over the political replacement effect and thus the perpetuation of uneven development so that political and economic power remains with a certain group. This indulgence in selective outrage and targeting while feigning ignorance to some indicates the implicit bias and the entanglement of the political leadership in segregation and unfair treatment. This is only counter-productive to the whole effort to achieve a drug-free society and sustainable forestry. Only fair handling of similar and related issues without prejudice can bring about harmony and social justice.

In his discussion on the predatory theory of the state, Douglass North (1981) argues that good institutions will “provide checks against expropriation by the government or other politically powerful groups” (Acemoglu and Johnson 2005: 950). The continuing eviction drives, the ongoing demonisation, and selective outrage imply the absence of good institutions in India in general and Manipur in particular. It has become what Galbraith (2008) calls “the predator state” for certain interests of the dominant group. To defuse this predicament, the state government needs to rethink its policies. What is needed is a selective targeting for integrated rural development and selective outrage

on any delay in the implementation of such rural development initiatives. This will not only reduce uneven development so as to steer the state ahead into the future, but will also result in inclusive policies which will bring about belongingness and equitable results in the social and environmental concerns of the state.

Sexual Violence as a Weapon

On the morning of 4 May 2023, fake news was spread on social media that Meitei women were raped openly by Kukis in Churachandpur.⁹ A day later, the Manipur Police chief clarified that “no rape cases are reported in Churachandpur” (*Ukhrul Times* 2023). Another similar misinformation was also spread alleging that a Meitei nurse was raped and killed in Churachandpur. However, *Quint* (2023) revealed that the alleged viral graphic image of the woman was from a November 2022 case where “a woman’s body was found in a red suitcase near Yamuna expressway in Mathura.” These fake news and misinformation created a charged environment of counter-sexual assault as revenge—a form of the community’s retributive justice. Several cases of sexual violence that were committed against Kuki women that day were reported in different parts of Imphal Valley. Despite the reports of sexual violence in various media outlets, there was no collective outrage, unlike the Nirbhaya case of 2012, as it remained, to use Baxi’s words, a “public secret.” However, the video of one of the sexual violence cases emerged on 19 July 2023, which showed two women being paraded naked by a mob of Nongpok Sekmai in Thoubal district. It took two and a half months for the viral video to emerge as mobile internet was banned since the evening of 4 May and a week later all fibre-optic internet services were also included in the ban. When the graphic viral video emerged, there were more concerns with the video—who shot the video and distributed it, rather than investigating the case of sexual violence. Several x (formerly Twitter) posts, including those in media reports and panel discussions that used the video, were “taken down by Twitter” and YouTube “due to the request made by the Indian government” (*Firstpost* 2023).

The ordeal these two women were made to go through also subsequently emerged, wherein a mob of the Meitei community threatened the two victims saying “If you don’t take off your clothes, we will kill you” (Saikia 2023). The perpetrators forced them to strip naked, paraded them on the road, groped, dragged them to a paddy field, and openly gang-raped one of them. During the incident, one of the victims, whose father and brother were killed by the mob, revealed that four policemen were present at the site of violence but none of them came to their help (Ali 2023). This is one among many glaring cases of pervasive complaints about large-scale complicity of the Manipur police in the violence. This happened despite Manipur being one of the few Indian states to promulgate an ordinance on protection from mob violence in 2018, and the state police have the responsibility “to prevent the commission of all offences” under the ordinance.

The confession of K Lata Devi, the mother of Huirem Herodas—who is the main accused of the sexual violence—confessed that “he said he didn’t do it with any personal motive. He did it as part of a mob and in the interest of our (Meitei) community” (Matharu 2023). This confession reveals how boundaries are sharply drawn on ethnic lines and in conflicting situations, communities in the state amplify their divisions and are totally blind to justice and morality to serve the interests of their respective communities. It is not just the perpetrators of sexual violence who have to be brought to justice but also those who have created and circulated fake news. Those accused of spreading fake news were left scot-free at large, when they could be punished, *inter alia*, for abetment under the Indian Penal Code.

With the publication of Susan Brownmiller’s work *Against Our Will* in 1975, “rape came to be seen as a preferred form of political violence against women, rather than an expression of overpowering or pathological male lust” (Baxi 2014: 140). In this seminal work, Brownmiller (1975: 114) argues that “Up-risings, riots, revolutions and minor skirmishes with racial and political overtones all have provided an outlet,

and sometimes even an ideological excuse, for men to practice rape on women.” In such circumstances of unrest, there is “real-life deployment of the penis as weapon” (Brownmiller 1975: 11). What distinguishes this case of sexual violence is the attempt to collectively shield the perpetrators from legal sanction. On 29 July 2023, a public protest rally was held in Thoubal district organised by Apunba Club and Meira paibis which “condemned the arrest of several accused in the recent viral video case by Thoubal district police, and called for stopping any further arrest in the case” (*Imphal Free Press* 2023).¹⁰ The report also mentioned about the assurance given by the district administration “to stop arresting those men involved” in the case.

Ethnic Violence and Demand for Autonomy

Now that ethnic violence had occurred on 3 May 2023, which continued for four days and intermittently for more than a year, wherein more than 200 people have been killed, 310 people injured, 1,700 houses damaged, and 60,000 people displaced, the division of Manipur on ethnic lines through the drawing of imaginary political boundaries is already done on the foothills surrounding the Imphal Valley. As many as 250 churches were either completely burnt, demolished, evicted, vandalised, or destroyed. Political solutions in the form of political decentralisation will be the first step to bring back peace and normalcy in this state.¹¹ The demand for the extension of Sixth Schedule to the hills areas has been stonewalled by the Manipur government for the last 45 years. On the contrary, in the former princely state of Tripura, the demand to include the Tripura Tribal Areas Autonomous District Council into the Sixth Schedule was recommended by the Tripura assembly and was included in 1984 through a constitutional amendment within two years since the demand was raised. The persistent demand in Manipur has been stalled by the insistence of the state government for “local adjustment and amendments,” which is seen as a ploy to take away the real intention of the Sixth Schedule itself, where local self-governance of the

councils to control land and forest would be possibly weakened. Since the violence broke out, 10 Kuki members of the legislative assembly (MLAs) on 12 May 2023 demanded a “separate administration under the Constitution of India.” This can be interpreted into four forms of autonomy arrangements. The lowest form is the normal autonomy provisions under the Sixth Schedule of the Constitution, such as the Lai Autonomous District Council, Mara Autonomous District Council, and Chakma Autonomous District Council in Mizoram. Within the Sixth Schedule, there is an existing territorial council and three proposed councils, that is, the Bodoland Territorial Council and the proposed territorial councils in Karbi Anglong, Dima Hasao, and Tripura Tribal areas under the Constitution (One Hundred and Twenty-fifth Amendment) Bill, 2019, which will give more powers to the councils. The other two possible autonomies under the Constitution, which the Kuki MLAs also later stated in their demand, are union territory with the legislature, and a separate state demand put forward by the Kuki Inpi Manipur on 13 July 2023. While the former two autonomy frameworks will not disrupt the territorial integrity of the existing state, the latter two need the exercise of Article 3 of the Constitution by Parliament to redraw the state boundary in the creation of a new political entity.

The Administrative Reforms Commission Report on the Administration of Union Territories and the North–East Frontier Agency (NEFA) in January 1969 emphasised the need for “devising an appropriate administrative set-up for” Manipur, Tripura and NEFA due to “the predominant tribal character of the populations,” wherein “[t]he satisfaction of the people with the administration goes a long way towards ensuring the objectives of national security and defence” of the country. With regard to Manipur, the report added: “There is a substantial tribal population in this Territory mainly confined to the hill areas. The tribal people fall into two broad ethnic groups, the Kukis and the Nagas.” And “suggest[ed] that the system of tribal administration now prevailing in the Hill Districts of Assam may be introduced in these tribal areas.

This will mean the creation of two autonomous districts for the Kuki and the Naga tribal areas. If necessary, autonomous regions can be carved out for smaller tribal groups" (ARC 1969: 16–17). Providing a territorial council with all the powers that are intended for such councils under the Constitution (One Hundred and Twenty-fifth Amendment) Bill, 2019 will protect the interest of the Kukis and also the Nagas as well as preserve the territorial integrity of the state, despite the majority Meitei community opposing it for the last four and a half decades. However, given the magnitude of the violence, the weaponisation of rape as structural violence and the resulting differences that run so deep and the state government not being in a position to restore order, the union government needs to intervene to bring lasting peace. The ball is in the court of the union government.

NOTES

- 1 The Manipur Legislative Assembly has 60 members. The news was reported in Morning Bell, "All 60 MLAs Become Warriors of 'War on Drugs'," 4 March 2023, <https://themorningbell.in/index.php/2023/03/04/all-60-mlas-become-warriors-of-war-on-drugs/>.
- 2 To know more about special category states in India, see Bhattacharjee (2016). In a later commentary, Bhattacharjee (2018) argued that: "Though the Fourteenth Finance Commission report gives an impression that the special category status given to some states has de facto been abolished, the reality is that the benefits enjoyed by these states remain well protected."
- 3 This data was revealed during the question hour on 24 August 2021 in the Manipur state assembly. Source: Doordarshan Manipur, "13th Session of 11th Manipur Legislative Assembly - 3rd Sitting (24th August, 2021)," streamed live on 24 Aug 2021, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qfEJrVnWuUM> (30:28-40:34).
- 4 "The Soils," Department of Horticulture & Soil Conservation, Government of Manipur, https://horticulture.mn.gov.in/soil_of_manipur.html.
- 5 Special Cell Delhi Police Twitter handle, <https://twitter.com/CellDelhi/status/1627593918534782976>.
- 6 For example, studies by Lian (2013) and Nepram (2002) point to this connection.
- 7 In the foreword to the second edition of Elwin's book, *A Philosophy for NEFA* published in 1959, Nehru spelt out his "Panch Sheel" or five cardinal principles concerning the government's attitude towards the tribals in order to prevent the loss of identity and culture.
- 8 In a recent paper, I discuss the conflict-induced displacements and border crossing that occurred six decades ago, and the resettlement of the displaced people of the state who are wrongly termed as "refugees" and "immigrants" today. See Haokip (2023a).
- 9 I personally tweeted this video for further reference, https://twitter.com/th_robert/status/1681687518847315974.
- 10 This report was quickly deleted on the same day due to public pressure from Imphal Valley. However, archives were maintained regarding this report in social media.
- 11 I suggested this solution for prevention of future riots while writing an *EPW* editorial comment; see Haokip (2023b: 7).

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