



UPSC & STATE PCS CURRENT AFFAIRS · UJIYARI.COM

EDITORIAL ANALYSIS

Manipur at Three Years — The Governance Failure No Anniversary Should Normalise

 **HINDUSTAN TIMES**3 May 2026 · **GS2** **GS1**

CURATED & WRITTEN BY

**Bharat Choudhary**

UPSC Educator & Content Creator

 [linkedin.com/in/epicbharat](https://www.linkedin.com/in/epicbharat)**ALSO FROM THE CREATOR****BharatNotes**Free UPSC notes, MCQs, PYQ analysis. **100% Free.**bharatnotes.com →**ADVERTISE****Advertise with Ujiyari**

Reach thousands of UPSC aspirants daily.

 epicbharat@gmail.com

Manipur at Three Years — The Governance Failure No Anniversary Should Normalise

Hindustan Times

3 May 2026

GS2

GS1

HT Hindustan Times

3 tags

THE EDITORIAL ARGUMENT

Three years have passed since the violence that began on **May 3, 2023** in Manipur. Over **250 people** have lost their lives. More than **60,000 remain displaced** — living in relief camps, unable to return to their homes and villages. The state continues to be divided along ethnic lines with **Meiteis dominant in the Imphal Valley** and **Kuki-Zo communities in the hills**, with little social or economic interaction between them.

The **Thadou Inpi Manipur's** observance of today as a “**Day of Peace and Prayer**” is a community's quiet insistence that the dead be remembered. What is less quiet — and more politically inconvenient — is the question of why, three years on, there is still no credible peace process.

WHAT WENT WRONG

The Immediate Trigger

The conflict was sparked by protests against a **Manipur High Court order** directing the state government to consider granting the **Meitei community** Scheduled Tribe (ST) status. The **All Tribal Students Union Manipur (ATSUM)** led a “Tribal Solidarity March” in Churachandpur on May 3, 2023. The march turned violent; within hours the state was in flames.

The deeper question is not why the march turned violent — crowd management failures and local provocateurs played a role — but why a **decades-old demand** (Meitei ST status) had been allowed to accumulate so much inflammable political tension without a resolution process.

The Structural Tensions

Geography dictates politics in Manipur. The **Imphal Valley** — roughly 10% of Manipur's geographic area — holds over 57% of the population and is politically dominant. The hills — 90% of area, 43% of population — contain all the tribal communities. This **asymmetry** makes simple majoritarian democracy structurally unfair to tribal communities in the hills.

The ST classification debate is at the heart of the conflict. Tribal communities are protected under the **Fifth and Sixth Schedules** (Manipur specifically uses the Hill Areas Committee framework under **Article 371©** rather than the Sixth Schedule). Tribal land cannot be sold to non-tribals. If Meiteis receive ST status, tribal communities fear that the land protection regime would collapse — enabling valley-dominant communities to acquire hill land.

This is not an irrational fear. It has historical precedent in other parts of Northeast India where demographic shifts followed formal changes in tribal classification.

THE THREE-YEAR GOVERNANCE RESPONSE: AN ASSESSMENT

ACTION	ASSESSMENT
Military/CAPF deployment	Contained large-scale violence; but village-level sporadic incidents continue
AFSPA extension in fringe areas	Necessary for security; but creates impunity concerns
Relief camps	60,000+ people in camps — humanitarian minimum maintained
High-level Central mediation	Absent — no Senior Minister-level talks with community leadership
Formal peace dialogue	None — Meitei apex bodies and Kuki-Zo apex bodies have not sat at the same table
ST status for Meitei	No resolution announced
Kuki-Zo demand for separate UT/state	Under study — no formal response
Chief Minister change	None — CM N. Biren Singh continues (despite demands for his removal)

The Central government’s approach has been to deploy security forces, maintain a minimum humanitarian floor, and wait for tensions to de-escalate on their own. Three years on, they have not.

WHAT GENUINE RESOLUTION WOULD REQUIRE

1. A credible mediation process. Not a government-appointed committee, but a respected neutral figure — a retired Supreme Court justice, a former governor of the region — with a mandate to bring Meitei and Kuki-Zo leadership to the table.

2. Resolution of the ST classification question. The demand needs a formal, constitutional answer — not indefinite deferral. The National Commission for Scheduled Tribes should give a public recommendation; Parliament should decide.

3. Hill-Valley governance restructuring. The **Hill Areas Committee (HAC)** framework needs reform — either upgrade to Sixth Schedule-equivalent protection for hill tribal areas, or design a new **asymmetric** governance arrangement that protects tribal land rights conclusively.

4. Accountability for violence. A Special Investigation Team with SC oversight should investigate the worst incidents of violence. Three years of impunity — for killings, arson, and displacement — has entrenched the view that the justice system does not apply equally.

UPSC RELEVANCE

PAPER	ANGLE
GS2 — Polity	Article 371©, Hill Areas Committee, AFSPA, ST classification, tribal land rights, Centre-State
GS1 — Society	Ethnic identity, Northeast India communities, tribal-non-tribal conflict
GS3 — Internal Security	Ethnic violence, CAPF deployment, conflict management
GS4 — Ethics	Governance responsibility, accountability, minority protection

Mains Keywords: Manipur ethnic violence, Meitei-Kuki-Zo conflict, Article 371©, Hill Areas Committee, Scheduled Tribe classification, **Fifth Schedule**, Sixth Schedule, AFSPA in Northeast, ATSUM, Thadou Inpi, Kuki-Zo separate administration demand, tribal land rights, Inner Line Permit (ILP)

Prelims Facts Corner

ITEM	FACT
Manipur violence start	May 3, 2023
Deaths	250+
Displaced	60,000+
Trigger	ATSUM march against Meitei ST status
Meitei status	Currently OBC (demand for ST)
Article 371©	Manipur's special constitutional provision — Hill Areas Committee
Sixth Schedule	Applies to Assam, Meghalaya, Tripura, Mizoram — NOT Manipur
Hill Areas Committee	Manipur's tribal oversight mechanism under Article 371©
Thadou	Largest Kuki-Zo sub-group; Thadou Inpi = apex body
CM Manipur	N. Biren Singh (BJP)
ILP	Inner Line Permit — applicable in Manipur, Nagaland, Arunachal, Mizoram

PRACTICE TODAY'S QUIZ



[Take the 3 May 2026 Quiz →](#)

← **NEWER EDITORIAL**

India at 157 — What World Press Freedom Day Means for...

OLDER EDITORIAL →

India at No. 5 — The SIPRI Report and the Missing Defence...



CURATED & WRITTEN BY

Bharat Choudhary

UPSC Educator & Content Creator

[linkedin.com/in/epicbharat](https://www.linkedin.com/in/epicbharat)[Read Full Article on Ujiyari →](#)<https://ujiyari.com/editorials/2026/05/ht-manipur-three-years-conflict-peace-gap/>

ALSO FROM THE CREATOR

BharatNotes

Free UPSC study platform — subject-wise notes across all 4 GS papers, Prelims MCQs, Mains answer frameworks, PYQ analysis & progress tracking. **100% Free • No Login Required.**

[Start Preparing → bharatnotes.com](http://bharatnotes.com)

📌 OPPORTUNITY

Advertise with Ujiyari

Reach **thousands of serious UPSC & State PCS aspirants** daily through our PDFs, website, and social channels.

Ideal for: Coaching institutes • EdTech platforms • Book publishers • Exam prep apps

[✉ epicbharat@gmail.com](mailto:epicbharat@gmail.com)

Write to us for rates & media kit

Free UPSC & State PCS Current Affairs · ujiyari.com · bharatnotes.com