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**EDITORIAL ANALYSIS**

# Manipur: The Roads We No Longer Take

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CURATED &amp; WRITTEN BY

**Bharat Choudhary**

UPSC Educator &amp; Content Creator

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# Manipur: The Roads We No Longer Take

 **The Indian Express**

2 July 2026

GS2

GS3

 Source: [ujjyari.com](http://ujjyari.com) — researched, fact-checked & UPSC-mapped


## INTERVIEW ANGLE

*"In Manipur, communities that once shared highways now avoid each other's territory. President's Rule has ended and a new government is talking to both sides. What does it take to make the roads safe to travel again?"*

 Source: [Original editorial](#)
[The Indian Express](#)
 **Every fact web-verified against primary sources** (<https://ujjyari.com/how-we-verify/>)

## WHY THIS MATTERS NOW

**President's Rule** in Manipur, imposed under **Article 356** in February 2025, was **revoked in February 2026** with an elected government restored; in **March 2026** the new government held its **first direct dialogue** with Kuki-Zo representatives in three years. Yet the roads between hills and valley remain scarred by conflict. For an aspirant, this is a core GS2/GS3 case on **internal security, federalism** (<https://ujjyari.com/terms/federalism/>) **and ethnic reconciliation**.

## THE CRUX IN 60 WORDS

Ethnic conflict since **May 2023** between **Meitei** and **Kuki-Zo** communities severed movement across Manipur's **hills and valley**, killing hundreds and displacing tens of thousands. **Article 356** held the state together; its **revocation (Feb 2026)** and the **first dialogue (March 2026)** open a window. Restoring **roads, trust and administration**, safely and even-handedly, is now the test of durable peace.

## THE ISSUE, DECODED

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CONCEPT	WHAT IT MEANS	WHY IT MATTERS
<b>Ethnic partition</b>	Hills-valley routes became no-go zones	Cuts off trade, health, schooling, governance
<b>Article 356</b>	President's Rule when a state cannot be run per Constitution	Held Manipur together, Feb 2025 to Feb 2026
<b>Article 355</b> ( <a href="https://ujijari.com/terms/article-355/">https://ujijari.com/terms/article-355/</a> )	Union's duty to ensure states run per Constitution	Constitutional basis for central responsibility
<b>Reconciliation</b>	Restoring trust and normal life between communities	Peace is the absence of fear, not just violence

## THE ANALYSIS: WHY CONNECTIVITY IS THE HEART OF PEACE

- ❶ **The human cost.** Violence since May 2023 killed hundreds and displaced tens of thousands, hardening a physical and psychological partition of the state.
- ❷ **Roads as lifelines.** Severed routes cripple trade, healthcare, education and administration; a road no one dares take is a governance and humanitarian failure, not only a security one.
- ❸ **The constitutional path held.** Article 356 (Feb 2025) kept the state functioning; its revocation (Feb 2026) restored an elected government, showing President's Rule as a bridge, not a destination.
- ❹ **A dialogue window.** The first direct Meitei-Kuki dialogue in March 2026 is a fragile but real opening that must be sustained, not squandered.

## DATA AND INSTITUTIONS VAULT

*conflict erupted 3 May 2023; President's Rule under Article 356 imposed February 2025; revoked February 2026 with an elected government restored; first direct Meitei-Kuki dialogue March 2026. Toll (official figures): hundreds killed and roughly 60,000 displaced (as reported by late 2024). Communities: Meitei (majority, Imphal valley) and Kuki-Zo (hill tribes). Constitution: Article 355 (Union's duty to protect states) and Article 356 (President's Rule); Article 356 is subject to the S.R. Bommai (1994) safeguards and judicial review (<https://ujijari.com/terms/judicial-review/>). Principle: Manipur is an integral part of India; reconciliation must treat all communities as equal citizens under one constitutional order.*

## THE DEBATE

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**Argument to restore connectivity now:** Free movement is the precondition (<https://ujjiyari.com/vocab/precondition/>) for trade, healthcare and normal life; the longer roads stay severed, the deeper the partition and the harder reconciliation becomes.

**Argument to secure trust first:** Forcing free movement before confidence is rebuilt could reignite clashes; security and inter-community buy-in must come before an abrupt push for normalcy.

**Balanced verdict:** These are not opposites but a sequence. Secure key corridors with impartial forces, sustain dialogue and enable voluntary safe return, then widen movement, so that connectivity, trust and administration are restored together and normalcy holds.

## HOW TO THINK ABOUT THIS (TRANSFERABLE SKILL)

*Negative peace is merely the absence of active violence; positive peace is the restoration of normal life, movement, trust, institutions and justice. A ceasefire (<https://ujjiyari.com/vocab/ceasefire/>) that leaves roads severed is negative peace only. Judge any conflict resolution by whether ordinary life resumes for both sides, not by whether the guns have gone quiet.*

## DIAGRAM-IN-WORDS

Ethnic conflict (May 2023) -> deaths + ~60,000 displaced -> hills-valley routes become no-go zones -> trade, health, schooling, administration collapse -> Article 356 (Feb 2025) holds state together -> revoked (Feb 2026), elected govt restored -> first dialogue (March 2026) -> secure corridors + safe return + even-handed administration -> connectivity + trust restored -> durable, positive peace

## THE WAY FORWARD

- 1 **Secure the corridors.** Deploy impartial central forces to make key highways safe for all communities before pushing wider free movement.
- 2 **Sustain dialogue.** Institutionalise the Meitei-Kuki talks begun in March 2026 into a credible, time-bound reconciliation process.
- 3 **Enable safe return.** Ensure the voluntary, dignified return and rehabilitation (<https://ujjiyari.com/vocab/rehabilitation/>) of the displaced, with relief and reconstruction.
- 4 **Restore even-handed governance.** Rebuild impartial administration and justice so both communities trust the state as a neutral guarantor.

## THE TAKEAWAY BOX

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*Argue that peace in Manipur is measured by restored connectivity, trust and administration, not just the end of violence, and set out a sequenced, constitutional reconciliation path.*

*“A road no one dares travel is a wound that stays open.”*

*conflict from 3 May 2023; Meitei (valley) and Kuki-Zo (hills); Article 355 and Article 356; President’s Rule imposed Feb 2025, revoked Feb 2026; S.R. Bommai (1994) safeguards; ~60,000 displaced.*

*How should the state balance the urgency of restoring normal life against the risk that premature normalcy reignites conflict? What is the administrator’s duty to appear neutral between communities?*

*UPSC has asked on internal security in the North-East, ethnic conflict, and Article 356/federalism. This editorial ties them to Manipur’s road to recovery.*

*internal security, cooperative federalism (<https://ujiyari.com/terms/cooperative-federalism/>), Article 356, North-East integration, humanitarian rehabilitation, positive peace.*

**Sources:** *Indian Express* (<https://indianexpress.com/section/opinion>), *PIB* (<https://pib.gov.in>), *Ministry of Home Affairs* (<https://www.mha.gov.in>)

Source: Manipur: The Roads We No Longer Take — Ujiyari.com | Free UPSC & State PCS Editorial Analysis

**KEY ARGUMENTS AT A GLANCE**

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**Years of ethnic conflict between Meitei and Kuki-Zo communities severed connectivity and normal movement across Manipur's hills and valley, leaving communities cut off and administration strained; with President's Rule now revoked, an elected government restored and the first direct dialogue begun, restoring roads, trust and governance is essential, and the human and security cost of continued breakdown keeps mounting.**

 **SUPPORTING**

- The conflict since May 2023 killed hundreds and displaced tens of thousands, and it hardened a physical and psychological partition: highways and routes that linked the Imphal valley and the surrounding hills became no-go zones for one community or the other.
- Severed connectivity is not only a security problem, it cripples trade, healthcare, education and administration, deepening grievance and mutual distrust and making reconciliation harder the longer it lasts.
- The constitutional path has worked as designed: President's Rule under Article 356 (imposed February 2025) held the state together, and its revocation in February 2026 with an elected government restored, followed by the first direct Meitei-Kuki dialogue in March 2026, opens a window for normalisation.

 **COUNTER**

Some argue that reopening roads and forcing free movement before trust is rebuilt risks fresh clashes, and that security must be assured first; a premature push for normalcy without buy-in from both communities could reignite violence rather than heal it.

 **WAY FORWARD**

Rebuild connectivity and confidence together, secure key corridors with impartial central forces, sustain inter-community dialogue, ensure safe and voluntary return of the displaced, restore even-handed administration and hold a credible, constitutional reconciliation process.


**MAINS ANSWER FRAMEWORK**

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**QUESTION**

*"Peace is not the absence of violence but the restoration of normal life." Examine, with reference to Manipur, how restoring connectivity, trust and administration is central to durable ethnic reconciliation. (250 words)*

**INTRODUCTION**

Manipur's tragedy since May 2023 is measured not only in lives lost but in roads no longer taken. Ethnic conflict between the Meitei and Kuki-Zo communities partitioned the state's hills and valley. With President's Rule now revoked and dialogue begun, restoring connectivity, trust and administration is the real test of peace.

**BODY**

The breakdown was comprehensive. Violence that erupted on 3 May 2023 killed hundreds and displaced tens of thousands, and it hardened into a physical partition: highways and routes linking the Imphal valley to the surrounding hills became unusable for one community or the other.

Severed connectivity is not merely a security failure; it strangles trade, healthcare, schooling and administration, and every month of breakdown deepens grievance and distrust, making reconciliation harder. Here the constitutional design has held.

The Union imposed President's Rule under Article 356 in February 2025, using Article 355's mandate to ensure governance per the Constitution; it kept the state together during the worst period. In February 2026 President's Rule was revoked and an elected government restored, and in March 2026 the new Chief Minister held the first direct dialogue with Kuki-Zo representatives in three years.

This is a genuine opening. The counter, that forcing free movement before trust returns could reignite clashes, is a real caution, not an objection to reconciliation: it argues for sequencing, secure corridors and dialogue before an abrupt push, so that normalcy is durable, not staged.

**CONCLUSION**

A road no one dares travel is a wound that stays open. Manipur's healing runs through connectivity, safe return, impartial administration and sustained dialogue, all within a constitutional, unifying frame that treats every community as equal citizens of one India.


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CURATED &amp; WRITTEN BY

## Bharat Choudhary

UPSC Educator &amp; Content Creator

[linkedin.com/in/epicbharat](https://www.linkedin.com/in/epicbharat)[Read Full Article on Ujiyari →](#)<https://ujiyari.com/editorials/2026/07/ie-manipur-connectivity-conflict-2026/>

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