

# As PM Modi visits Manipur, 5 key issues in conflict-torn state

Twenty seven months after the conflict in Manipur began in 2023, a number of key issues remain unresolved in the state. Here's what you need to know

Written by [Sukrita Baruah](#)

[Follow](#)

Guwahati | Updated: September 12, 2025 07:43 PM IST

🕒 1 min read

As Trusted  
Source on



Tight security arrangements are underway at Kangla Western Gate for the arrival of Prime Minister Narendra Modi in Imphal on Saturday. (ANI Photo)

Prime Minister Narendra Modi will fly to Manipur [on Saturday](#) and interact with internally displaced people in Churachandpur and Imphal. This will be the Prime Minister's [first trip to the state](#) since the ethnic conflict between the Meitei and Kuki-Zo communities began in May 2023.

In the 27 months since, Manipur has witnessed prolonged periods of violence and displacement, a collapse of law and order, the strengthening of armed groups, a Lok Sabha election, the imposition of President's Rule, and, recently, a gradual ebb in the violence. Here are 5 key issues in the state, and where they stand today.

## 01 Rehabilitation of displaced population

More than 280 relief camps across Manipur house some 57,000 internally displaced people, many of whom have been living there for over two years now. Broadly, there are two categories of displacement that have taken place.

- Displacement from settlements in areas where the other community is in the majority. Thousands of Kuki-Zo people have been displaced from Imphal and other towns in the valley, whereas Meiteis have been displaced from the border town of Moreh and hill towns such as Kangpokpi and Churachandpur.
- Displacement of those living in "fringe areas" at the frontier of the Meitei-majority valley and Kuki-Zo majority hills, close to settlements of the other community. These displacements occurred after attacks by the other community, or in apprehension of such attacks.

In July, then Chief Secretary P K Singh had announced an ambitious three-phase resettlement plan aimed at winding down all the relief camps by the end of the year. This would entail first resettling the second category of displaced persons in phases — July, October, and December were set as target timelines — and then resettling the first category of displaced persons in prefabricated houses after restoration of full normalcy.

While officials say that some 5,000 people had already returned to their homes before the announcement of this plan, progress has been limited on

this front.

## 02 Free movement in the state

Through the course of the conflict, the boundaries between valley and hill districts have hardened, and individuals from neither community have been able to safely travel in areas where the other community is in majority.

These boundaries are heavily manned by security personnel and have come to be called “buffer zones” between the two communities. As a result, the Meiteis are unable to leave the state’s central valley and do not have access to the highways, and Kuki-Zos do not have access to Imphal and all the facilities concentrated there, including access to the airport.

---

**Also Read |** [Manipur’s ethnic faultlines: Kuki-Meitei divide & recent unrest](#)

---

After President’s Rule was imposed in the state in February this year, the Centre had announced that it would enforce “free movement” through the state’s highways but this backfired on the first day itself. One person died and many others were injured in Kuki-Zo majority Kangpokpi district on March 8 when they clashed with security forces escorting a Manipur State Transport bus from Imphal while resisting this.

Now, while Kuki-Zo groups have [largely agreed to cooperate with the movement of essential goods](#) to the valley through the highways, they continue to state that they will not allow the movement of Meiteis across “buffer zones”. No similar agreement or commitment has been arrived at with Meitei groups for the movement of Kuki-Zo people in the valley.

## 03 Dialogue between communities

For over one-and-a-half years, the state lived with deadly violence between the two communities in which more than 250 lives have been lost. The last such deadly cycle took place in November 2024, and the violence has ebbed since.

However, security officials in Manipur warn that the state continues to be vulnerable to spells of violence, especially since the population of both sides of the ethnic divide continue to be heavily armed, and in the absence of any dialogue between the communities. Currently, the Ministry of Home Affairs is engaging in talks with groups on both sides separately, and last week renewed a [Suspension of Operations \(SoO\) pact](#) with Kuki-Zo insurgent groups under the umbrellas of Kuki National Organization and the United People's Front.

A crucial clause in the SoO pact saw the Kuki-Zo groups agreeing to honour the "territorial integrity of Manipur," seemingly contrary to the primary demand from Kuki-Zo representatives for a "separate administration". The reactions to this pact reflect the hurdles to an understanding: while Meitei groups have objected to it for extending "overwhelming legitimacy" to these groups, Kuki-Zo groups have maintained that they will continue to push for "separate administration" with the KNO and UPF also jointly issuing a statement that their negotiations with the Central government will focus on demanding a Union Territory with legislature.

The Kuki-Zo groups allege that the partisan conduct by the state government under former Chief Minister N Biren Singh, including patronage to Meitei armed groups like Arambai Tenggol, have necessitated such an arrangement.

---

## 04 Government formation

After 21 months at the helm of the state during the course of the conflict, [Biren resigned as Chief Minister in February](#) this year. This resignation came after opposition from all quarters, from all stakeholders in the Kuki-Zo community, including BJP MLAs, to a large section of Meitei BJP MLAs.

Within days, [President's Rule](#) was imposed in the state, which has continued since. While Biren's resignation and the installation of President's Rule had been a central demand by Kuki-Zo groups, the move was largely well received across the valley as well.

---

**Express View** | [An opening in Manipur, an opportunity to be seized](#)

---

But since about two months after Biren's departure, there has been a growing push from valley-based and Naga NDA MLAs for the restoration of a popular government in the state citing "public demand" and "pressure." Centre, however, has indicated no inclination to lift President's Rule, unwilling to destabilise the current status quo.

## 05 The border situation

The state's porous international border with Myanmar has been a prickly issue in context of the conflict. Meitei stakeholders have continuously alleged that unregulated illegal immigration of Chin people from Myanmar — who share a common ethnicity with the Kuki-Zo — has been a major cause for volatility in the region.

The Centre decided to scrap the Free Movement Regime with Myanmar — which allowed tribes living along the border on either side to travel up to 16 km inside the other country without a visa and stay up to two weeks — and announced that the porous border will be fenced.

This is an emotive issue not just for the Kuki-Zo but also the Nagas, as both communities share close ethnic, economic, and day-to-day relationships with people on the other side of the border. Both the Kuki-Zo and Nagas oppose the Centre's decision, with. Ahead of the PM's visit, the United Naga Council, the apex group for Manipur's Naga communities, **had imposed a "trade embargo"** blocking all the major routes through which goods enter the state **to push for this demand but has now temporarily suspended this.**

### FROM THE HOMEPAGE



**India, China test new trust-building steps at LAC: More cameras, fewer clashes**



**Manipur rolls out red carpet, navigates red flags as Modi makes touchdow...**