

Mains Master

Dangerous status quo: On continuing hostilities in Manipur

Introduction:

Manipur, a tapestry of diverse communities, grapples with the aftermath of eight months of ethnic violence between the Meitei and Kuki-Zo communities. Displaced families, disrupted lives, and a weakened state authority paint a harrowing picture, demanding immediate action and long-term solutions.

Background:

Historical grievances, perceived majoritarianism, and anti-Christian sentiment sowed the seeds of conflict. The porous border with Myanmar added further complexity, with drug trafficking and illegal migration fueling tensions.

Present Crisis:

Displaced families yearn to return home, but fear lingers. Schooling and healthcare remain fragile, while the state's writ struggles to reach the Kuki-Zo hill areas. Ethnic polarization casts a long shadow, hindering reconciliation and peacebuilding efforts.

Main Challenges of Manipur's Ethnic Violence: A Multifaceted Labyrinth

The eight-month-long ethnic conflict between the Meitei and Kuki-Zo communities in Manipur has thrown the state into a multidimensional crisis, riddled with intricate challenges that demand nuanced solutions.

Security Labyrinth:

- **Precarious Militarization:** The presence of militant outfits wielding weapons looted from police stations and camps on both sides poses a significant threat to security. Disarming non-state actors and preventing further militarization are paramount.
- **Erosion of Trust in Security Forces:** The lack of confidence in both the Manipur police and Assam Rifles from their respective opposing communities creates a vacuum of trust in official security mechanisms. Addressing these concerns through unbiased action and community engagement is crucial.
- **Porous Border and Cross-border Crimes:** The porous border with Myanmar facilitates illegal migration, drug trafficking, and movement of insurgents, complicating security efforts. Strengthening border control and addressing transnational cooperation are essential.

Fractured Social Fabric:

- **Deep-Seated Ethnic Tensions:** Historical grievances, perceived majoritarianism, and anti-Christian sentiment remain deeply rooted, fueling mistrust and perpetuating the cycle of violence. Fostering intercultural understanding and addressing historical injustices are key to healing these wounds.
- **Polarized Media and Civil Society:** Unfortunately, media and civil society organizations are also divided along ethnic lines, hindering their ability to play a unifying role. Promoting unbiased reporting and building bridges across communities through joint initiatives are crucial.
- **Displacement and Trauma:** Displaced families face hardship and uncertainty, while communities grapple with the emotional trauma of violence. Providing immediate relief, rehabilitation support, and trauma healing initiatives are essential.

Political and Governance Complexities:

- **Leadership Bias and Lack of Inclusivity:** The Chief Minister's perceived bias towards the Meitei community and his controversial linking of the conflict to the refugee situation erode trust and hinder inclusive governance. Upholding impartial leadership and ensuring equal representation of all communities are critical.
- **Limited State Authority:** The state government's inability to effectively control the Kuki-Zo hill areas raises concerns about its legitimacy and undermines its ability to maintain order. Strengthening governance capacity and fostering collaboration with local communities are necessary.
- **Inaction and Lack of Transparency:** The Union government's perceived ineffectiveness and lack of transparency in conflict resolution efforts breed frustration and resentment. Taking active and transparent steps towards peacebuilding through dialogue and resource allocation is vital.

Socioeconomic Disparities:

- **Unequal Resource Distribution:** Unequal access to education, employment opportunities, and land fuels resentment and exacerbates existing ethnic tensions. Promoting inclusive development and equitable resource distribution are crucial for long-term stability.
- **Economic Precariousness:** Poverty and unemployment, particularly among youth, make them vulnerable to recruitment by militant outfits. Creating economic opportunities and fostering sustainable livelihoods will help break this cycle.
- **Discriminatory Practices:** Discriminatory practices and social exclusion of minority communities perpetuate the cycle of marginalization and contribute to conflict. Building an inclusive society that celebrates diversity and combats discrimination is vital.

Immediate Response:

- **Humanitarian Aid:** Displaced families require immediate relief and support to rebuild their lives.
- **Restoring Order:** The state must regain control, ensuring safety and security for all communities.
- **Facilitating Dialogue:** Impartial actors must foster genuine dialogue and rebuild trust between Meitei and Kuki-Zo communities.

Role of Centre and State:

- **Active Engagement:** The Union government must step up with transparent support, resources, and active collaboration in conflict resolution.
- **Inclusive Governance:** The Chief Minister must prioritize impartial leadership, ensuring equal protection and addressing grievances across ethnic lines.

Comprehensive Approach:

- **Addressing Root Causes:** Long-term stability demands addressing social and economic disparities that fuel ethnic tension. Inclusive development and celebrating diversity are key.
- **Strengthening Institutions:** Effective governance, a vibrant civil society, and a free press are vital for upholding human rights and preventing future conflicts.
- **Reconciliation and Healing:** Trauma healing initiatives and promoting cultural understanding are crucial for forging a future of harmony.

Conclusion:

Manipur's path towards healing extends beyond immediate conflict resolution. It demands a sustained commitment to inclusive governance, social justice, and fostering a shared sense of belonging. Only then can the echoes of violence fade and give way to the melody of a united and harmonious Manipur.

Reconsidering the free movement regime

Background:

- The 1,643km India-Myanmar border, established in 1826 through the Treaty of Yandaboo, divided communities like Nagas, Kukis, Mizos, and Chins without their consent, sometimes even splitting villages and houses.
- Wary of Chinese influence in Myanmar, India sought to improve ties, leading to the FMR agreement in 2018 as part of the Act East policy.
- The agreement allowed people living within 16km of the border to travel for leisure, education, and medical care without a visa, with a border pass valid for a year.
- Localized border trade through customs stations and designated markets was also envisioned.

Reasons for Reconsidering FMR:

- **Security Concerns:**
 - Unguarded border facilitates cross-border movement of extremist groups like ULFA and NSCN-IM, who operate from Chin and Sagaing regions of Myanmar.
 - Drugs and wildlife trafficking are concerns, exacerbated by the porosity of the border.
- **Manipur Conflict:**
 - Ethnic clashes between Meitei and Kuki-Zo communities led to accusations of Kuki-Chins being "illegal immigrants" and "infiltrators".
 - Manipur Chief Minister linked the conflict to FMR and called for its abolition.
- **Ethnic Tensions:**
 - Kuki-Zo groups fear being stigmatized and marginalized if FMR ends, with potential labeling as "narco-terrorists" and facing "ethnic cleansing".
 - Mizoram, with strong ethnic ties to Chins, opposes the move due to its potential to sever cultural connections.

Scale of Migration:

- Civil war in Myanmar led to refugee influx, with Manipur pushing back 4,300 Myanmar nationals in 2022 and registering 2,187 in 2023.
- Mizoram accepted around 40,000 refugees due to shared ethnicity, and seeks central funds for their care and repatriation after the situation stabilizes.

Opposition to Ending FMR:

- **Mizoram:**
 - Chief Minister argues against severing cultural ties with Chins and emphasizes their shared history and ethnicity.
 - He sees the border as an arbitrary British creation and believes in preserving connections across the divide.
- **Nagaland:**
 - Naga Students' Federation condemns the proposed move, calling it "regressive" and a threat to regional stability.
 - They demand recognition of historical ties between Nagas and the Chin-inhabited territory beyond the border.

Unresolved Issues:

- **Balancing Security and Cultural Ties:**
 - Ensuring border security without impeding traditional movement and cultural connections between divided communities.
- **Addressing Refugees and Ethnic Relations:**
 - Finding humane solutions for refugees and facilitating their return when possible.
 - Tackling ethnic profiling and ensuring fair treatment of all communities, regardless of origin.
- **Historical Grudges and Political Tensions:**



• Addressing Refugees and Ethnic Relations:

- Finding humane solutions for refugees and facilitating their return when possible.
- Tackling ethnic profiling and ensuring fair treatment of all communities, regardless of origin.

• Historical Grudges and Political Tensions:

- Acknowledging the history of the border's division and addressing lingering grievances among divided communities.
- Fostering political dialogue and cooperation between India and Myanmar to address security concerns jointly.

Overall:

The FMR agreement is caught in a complex web of security concerns, historical grievances, and ethnic tensions. Finding a lasting solution requires a nuanced approach that addresses all dimensions without exacerbating existing divisions. Dialogue, mutual understanding, and respect for cultural ties are crucial in navigating this sensitive issue and paving the way for a peaceful and stable border region.

Scaling up FPOs

While both Farmer Producer Organisations (FPOs) and Self-help Groups (SHGs) aim to empower rural communities, a significant disparity exists in their trajectories. SHGBLP, piloted by NABARD for women's economic and social development, has become a global microfinance success story. FPOs, established in 2013 to leverage collective farmer power, haven't reached the same level of scale and impact. Examining the reasons behind this gap can offer valuable lessons for future rural development initiatives.

Scale and Outreach: A Stark Contrast:

- **SHGBLP leads by a mile:** India has around 1.2 crore SHGs, 88% of them all-women. SHG success stories include Kudumbashree in Kerala, Jeevika in Bihar, Mahila Arthik Vikas Mahamandal in Maharashtra and recently, Looms of Ladakh.
- **FPOs lag behind:** With 24,183 FPOs for 22 lakh farmers by March 2023, FPOs haven't achieved the same level of scale, indicating potential obstacles to their formation and engagement.

Unpacking the Differences:

- **Formation Complexity:** SHGs require simple rules and 10-20 members, while FPOs involve more paperwork and varying member requirements across agencies, like SFAC's 1000 vs. NABARD's 300-500.
- **Grassroots Support:** SHGs benefitted from dedicated support from NGOs and state missions like NRLM, ensuring on-ground presence and scaling-up efforts. FPOs lack such consistent, focused support at the grassroots level.
- **Credit Access Bottlenecks:** Despite schemes like PSL (Priority Sector Lending), FPOs face loan hurdles. Banks demand viable business plans, which many FPOs struggle to create due to limited market expertise. Lack of reliable market linkages after product aggregation further reduces bank confidence.

- **Group Dynamics and Ownership:** SHGs foster strong group dynamics and shared responsibility, while FPOs often struggle with these crucial aspects. Additionally, the gradual transfer of ownership to farmer members, a key success factor for SHGs, isn't readily implemented in FPOs.

Learning from SHGBLP: A Blueprint for FPO Transformation:

- **Streamline Formation:** Universalize and simplify FPO formation processes, reducing agency-specific variations and administrative hurdles.
- **Strengthen Grassroots Support:** Establish dedicated agencies or departments with strong rural presence to provide FPOs with on-ground guidance and support.
- **Bridge the Knowledge Gap:** Equip FPOs with training and resources for business planning, market linkages, risk management, and financial literacy.
- **Foster Bank-FPO Partnerships:** Incentivize and educate banks to recognize the viability of FPOs and invest in their success through dedicated lending schemes and partnerships.
- **Raise Rural Awareness:** Increase awareness about FPOs and their benefits among rural communities to encourage greater participation and ownership.
- **Empower Members, Transfer Ownership:** Gradually transfer ownership and responsibility to FPO members, fostering a stronger sense of community and long-term sustainability.

Beyond the Numbers: Inspiring Success Stories:

While challenges exist, FPOs hold immense potential. The article highlights successful examples like grape marketing in Maharashtra and organic turmeric in Odisha, showcasing the transformative power of these organizations.

A Collaborative Effort for Rural Prosperity:

The success of FPOs hinges on a collaborative effort. Government, public institutions, banks, development agencies, and NGOs must work together to address the identified challenges and provide the necessary support for FPOs to thrive. Learning from the SHGBLP experience and implementing the proposed solutions can help unleash the full potential of FPOs, fostering greater income generation, rural development, and a more empowered future for farmers and producers.

Prelims Booster

Govt provides ₹8,500 cr for coal gasification projects

- 💰 Union Cabinet approves ₹8,500 crore for coal gasification, targeting 100 million tonnes by FY30.
- 🇮🇳 CCEA greenlights Coal India's equity investments for coal-to-SNG and coal-to-ammonium nitrate facilities.

- 🎯 **Goal:** Reduce import dependence on methanol, ammonia, ammonium nitrate, and olefins.
- 💰 **Financial outlay** divided into three categories for gasification projects in public and private sectors.
- 🏢 **CIL's equity investments** for West Bengal and Odisha projects expected to complete by FY29.
- 🏢 **Competitive and transparent bidding processes** for entity selection in categories II and III.
- 🔥 **Coal Gasification Process:**
 - Converts coal into synthesis gas (syngas) composed of carbon monoxide, hydrogen, carbon dioxide, and water vapor through a chemical reaction at high temperatures with a controlled amount of oxygen and/or steam.
- 🌿 **Environmental Benefits:**
 - Cleaner than direct coal combustion, as impurities like sulfur and mercury can be removed from the syngas.
 - Offers the potential for carbon capture and storage (CCS) to reduce carbon dioxide emissions associated with coal use.
- 💡 **Versatile Applications:**
 - Syngas can be used for electricity production, synthetic natural gas, chemicals, and fuels like methanol and ethanol.
 - Also utilized as a reducing agent in the steel industry through the direct reduced iron (DRI) process.
- 🌍 **Strategic Importance:**
 - Provides a cleaner way to utilize coal, making it a strategic option for countries with large coal reserves, such as India, seeking cleaner energy solutions.
- 🏢 **National Coal Gasification Mission:**
 - Ministry of Coal has established the National Coal Gasification Mission to create awareness, develop a roadmap, and implement coal gasification projects.
 - Aims to map gasification potential, develop indigenous technology, create marketing strategies, and coordinate with stakeholders.

WHY TURKEY HAS FINALLY BACKED SWEDEN'S NATO MEMBERSHIP BID

- 🇸🇪 **Sweden's NATO Membership:**
 - Receives support from Turkey's parliament, overcoming opposition from Turkey and Hungary.
 - Stems from abandoning historical neutrality after Russia's invasion of Ukraine in 2022.
- 🛡️ **Collective Defense:**
 - NATO membership ensures collective defense, treating an attack on a member's territory as an attack on the entire alliance.
- 🇹🇷 **Turkey's Concerns and Support:**
 - Initially opposed Sweden's bid due to concerns about Sweden's stance on groups like the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) and Quran-burning protests.
 - Addressed concerns by tightening anti-terrorism laws, cracking down on PKK activities, and lifting restrictions on arms sales to Turkey.
- 💰 **Erdogan's Linkage:**
 - Erdogan linked Turkey's support for Sweden with the potential sale of 40 F-16 fighter jets by the US to Ankara.
- 🌍 **Strategic Significance:**
 - Sweden's NATO membership would extend NATO territory along almost all of the Baltic Sea coastline, facilitating defense operations and bringing advanced military capabilities.

Rise in livestock output shields farmers from vagaries of nature

- 🌾 **Shift in Food Production Landscape:**
 - NITI Aayog data reveals a significant rise in the share of livestock products from 17.6% in 1980-81 to 36.9% in 2020-21.
- 📈 **Per Capita Production Growth:**
 - Meat, fish, milk, fruits, and vegetables production has tripled since the 1960s, while egg production recorded an eightfold surge.
 - Except for pulses and millets, the production of all other commodities has outpaced population growth between 1950-51 and 2020-21.
- 📊 **Market-Driven Growth:**
 - NITI Aayog working paper highlights farmers' responsiveness to market signals, emphasizing demand-driven factors influencing output growth.

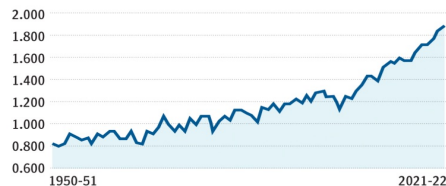
Livestock produce surges

Egg, milk, meat and fish register increase in output

Per capita production of major food commodities since 1960s (kg/year)

Item	1961-70	1971-80	1981-90	1991-00	2001-10	2011-20	CAGR (%)
Cereals	121.0	135.1	151.8	169.0	173.1	215.0	12.2
Pulses	23.3	18.4	16.3	14.6	12.3	15.7	-7.6
Oilseeds	15.3	15.3	16.8	23.2	21.6	24.1	9.5
Sugar	24.1	24.5	26.0	30.3	27.9	29.5	4.1
Fruits	23.2	31.8	33.1	41.2	49.7	69.7	24.6
Vegetables	47.6	68.9	72.4	77.3	97.7	133.5	22.9
Egg	0.4	0.7	1.0	1.4	2.1	3.3	52.5
Meat & Fish	4.3	4.6	5.0	6.9	8.3	13.3	25.3
Milk	43.2	42.1	55.6	70.8	88.0	121.2	22.9

Per capita per day food produced in India 1950-51 to 2021-22 (kg)



Source: NITI Aayog working paper by Ramesh Chand and Jaspal Singh

- 🍎 **Contrast in Production Growth:**
 - Growth in fruits, vegetables, milk, eggs, meat, and fish contrasts with cereals and sugarcane, heavily supported by government price mechanisms.
- 🌱 **Dynamic Agricultural Landscape:**
 - India's agricultural landscape is dynamic, with farmers actively participating in food production diversification and adapting to challenges.
- 📊 **Pragmatic Response:**
 - Livestock products' growing significance reflects a pragmatic response to market dynamics and changing consumer preferences.
- 🌾 **Future of Agriculture:**
 - As India transitions from the Green Revolution to "Amrit Kaal," farmers' resilience and adaptability become crucial in shaping the future of agriculture.