

10604/Media/GS(IW)

12 July 2023

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**UNETHICAL & 'EX PARTE' REPORTING OF INCIDENTS OF MANIPUR BY  
VERNACULAR MEDIA**

1. I am writing to bring to your notice the partisan manner of reporting being undertaken by media outlets in the Imphal Valley in Manipur which incidentally could be playing a major role in arousing passion & not letting sustainable peace to come in.
2. As you are aware, the state of Manipur has been gripped by ethnic conflict since 03 May. As on date, 148 lives have been lost and there appears to be no end to the conflict in the near future. An internet ban was imposed on 04<sup>th</sup> May to prevent the spread of content that could inflame the sensitive situation. However, the media outlets of Imphal valley have been indulging in outright misrepresentation of facts that violate all norms of journalistic ethics and in the process may be one of the major contributors to the instigation of further violence. The bias of the media in favour of one community and against the other community emerges clearly in their reportage.
3. The quantum of incorrect reporting being enormous, the undersigned would like to clearly establish the facts of the matter through three cases as illustrations, enumerated in succeeding paras.
4. **Khamenlok, 13 June.** The incident revolved around a mob which had raided villages of Khamenlok and adjoining areas commencing 12 June. The mob was duly supported by womenfolk who blocked Army troops trying to reach the village, so that the mob could go about burning the village unhindered. After carrying out arson of multiple villages, members supporting/ those who actually undertook arson were killed in a retaliatory strike. It was a clear case of the attackers being attacked. Few amongst those who got killed, not hailing from the area & the fact that they were killed in a village of the other community may serve to give an indication of turn of events on 13 June. **Notwithstanding the truth**, the newspapers in Imphal covered the incident as under:

(a) **The Sangai Express 15 June/ Peoples Chronicle 15 June.**



(b) Imphal Free Press 15 June.



5. Khoken, 09 June. The Kuki village of Khoken was attacked at 4 AM on 09 June by armed miscreants dressed in police uniforms. Three people were killed in the incident, including a 67 year old woman who was shot in the village church. A large number of Meitei women began gathering in the adjoining village of Sangaithei when news spread that the Army was engaging the attackers in a gunfight. The names of the deceased were posted on Twitter by a Kuki handle by noon on 09 June. Attack on Khoken village(Kuki Village) by Kuki militants & all those killed being termed as Kuki militants (one 67 year old woman & one 70 yr old man) could well serve to be another, black moment in journalism. The version of the incident covered by the Imphal based media outlets is as under:-

(a) The Sangai Express 10 June.



(b) People's Chronicle.

**Three killed, two injured in gun battle**

CHRONICLE NEWS SERVICE

IMPHAL: At least three people including a woman got killed while two others suffered injuries in gun battles at Khoken and Sangaitheh villages on Friday.

According to local sources, suspected armed Kuki militants opened firing around 4:30 am Friday following which the volunteers guarding the village retaliated leading to a fierce gunfight in the villages. After the firing ceased, three persons including a woman were found dead and two injured at Khoken village.

On receipt of report of the gun fight, state forces and personnel of Gorkha Regiment rushed to the area but the three persons were found dead and two others wounded.

A team of Kangpokpi police also arrived at the spot and recovered the three bodies while taking the injured persons for treatment.

It may be mentioned that combing operations were conducted on June 7

at Khoken and Sangaitheh villages by a combined team of state police, CRPF and the Gorkha Regiment under 9 Sector AR. The area domination by the combined security forces was carried out using sniffer dogs though neither arms nor anybody was recovered or arrested from the two villages.

Khoken village lies on the boundary between Kangpokpi and Imphal West districts and attackers and the victims belong to different communities.

Meanwhile, accusing the Meitei community for the killing, Indigenous Tribal Leaders' Forum (ITLF) said that this attack is yet another example of the utter disregard shown by the perpetrators and demanded swift action.

The incident also violated the peace process called by the Union Home Minister Amit Shah. We urge upon the authorities to take decisive actions against the militants," the ITLF said in a statement.

CONTINUE

**Three killed, two injured in gun battle**

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Committee on Tribals Unity (COTU), through a letter to Union Home Minister Amit Shah claimed that around 3:30 AM on Friday, a violent attack occurred at the Kuki-dominated Khoken Village under Kangpokpi District, which led to the death of three innocent villagers and injuries two others.

"The Kuki community wholeheartedly supported the combing operation with the hope that peace would prevail in the area. Nevertheless, this hope has tarnished and turned into a big tragedy," COTU said.

The committee identified the deceased as 70-year-old Domkhohoi Haokip, 55-year-old Kaimang Guite and 40-year-old Jangpao Touthang and the injured as Thongneh Haokip (45) and Seiminthang Haokip (20).

Additional columns of the Army and paramilitary forces have been deployed to control the situation at Khoken village.

Meanwhile, reports of incidents of violence including burning of houses were received from two other districts. But official confirmation has not yet been received.

(With inputs from agencies)

(c) Imphal Free Press.

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 SHIFA ANNOUNCES FREE TREATMENT FOR VICTIMS OF PRESENT CRISIS

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ence**

**Three killed in crossfire at Kangpokpi district**

By A Staff Reporter

IMPHAL 1 Jun 9  
 Three persons including one woman were killed while two persons were left injured in a crossfire at Khoken village under Kaithehmbi Police Station in Kangpokpi district around 4 am between two armed groups on Friday. The crossfire continued till 5:30 am, according to police. Khoken village is located right behind Sangaitheh village under Patsoi Police Station in Imphal West.

Sources said that the gunfight took place between an armed group suspected to be villagers and another group based up in a bunker at Khoken village.

The deceased persons have been identified as Kaimang Guite, aged 52 who was found dead in the forest, Domkhohoi Haokip, aged 65, wife of Seijang Haokip and one Jangpao Touthang, 45, while the injured persons are Thongneh Haokip, 30 and Thongkhohoi Haokip, 27.

Police listed both the three deceased and two injured as villagers of Khoken village.

According to police, gun-mortars of the three deceased persons were recovered at OMS, Kangpokpi while the two injured were taken to the Norey after receiving first aid at H. As-

sam Killa based at Kaithehmbi. Immediately upon receiving reports of the gunfight, CP Imphal West In-5 (Sector) and Brigadier of 9-Sector, CO of 5/9 GB arrived and inspected the site.

As sounds of the gunfight was heard, womenfolk from nearby villages came out and stopped the Central forces from entering into the area by blocking the road from Maklong to Sangaitheh. Even media persons were made to take an indirect route.

When the media persons arrived at Khoken village, it was found abandoned. A bunker built of wood and bamboo was found at the entrance of the village.



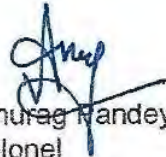
6. **Ambulance Burning, 04 June.** This incident was the nadir of journalism in Imphal and occurred in Iroisemba locality of Imphal. A seven-year old Kuki boy being evacuated to hospital for a bullet injury was burnt alive inside an ambulance with his Meitei mother and another relative by a mob of Meiteis at around 6 PM. The father of the boy was a Kuki and that relation was enough to brand the entire family as belonging to the Kuki community. Two women and one child were burnt alive in the ambulance by the mob. The incident was completely blacked out by Imphal media, because it would project one community in poor light. An incident that should have been front page headlines was conspicuously absent from the newspapers and completely glossed over. It was, however, picked up by some national media reporters on 06 June and eventually emerged on most national media portals by 07 June. Even there, a failed attempt was made to attribute responsibility of the burning to a Kuki mob. Reputed media outlet which carried an incorrect version was forced to amend the story, only after an angry backlash across social media.



7. The cases highlighted above are just a few examples of large scale 'unethical' reporting being undertaken by vernacular media. At a time when tensions between the two communities are running high, **least that the vernacular media can do is 'to give peace a chance to come back to Manipur.**

8. I, therefore, request that an examination of the above reports be conducted to ascertain whether the guidelines for journalists and media houses have been violated by these media houses which appears one-sided and appropriate action be taken accordingly.



  
 (Anurag Mandy)  
 Colonel  
 Colonel General Staff  
 (Information Warfare)  
 for General Officer Commanding