



## Kuki and Zomi Group

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The Government of India is looking at concluding peace talks with the 23 **Kuki and Zomi groups** in Manipur.

### Background

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- **Manipur was a princely state before merging with the Indian Union on 15<sup>th</sup> October 1949.** It has been inhabited by ethnic communities including Nagas, Kukis and Meiteis.
- Merger of Manipur and the delay in the conferring of full fledged **statehood (granted in 1972)** to it was greatly resented by the people of Manipur.  
Separate aspirations and perceived insecurity regarding overlapping claims over natural resources led various ethnic communities move apart.
- Following ethnic clashes between the Nagas and Kukis in the early 1990s, a number of Kuki outfits were formed as a means to counter Naga hegemony and assertion. Consequently, Kuki National Front (KNF) was formed in 1998.  
The areas in Manipur which **National Socialist Council of Nagalim-Issac Muivah - NSCN - IM** (formed in 1988) is demanding be merged with Nagaland as part of greater **Nagalim included large areas of Kuki inhabitancy.**
- Meanwhile, **Zomi Reunification Army (ZRA) was formed in 1997** whose objective is to protect the interests of the Paite community from the 'onslaught of any community or group'.
- However in 2008, 20 militant groups related to Kukis and Zomis under two umbrella organizations, Kuki National Organisation (KNO) and United People's Front (UPF) signed **Suspension of Operations (SoO) agreement** with the Government of India and Government of Manipur. The agreement aims to discuss demands put forward by the extremist groups and bring peace in Manipur.

### Ethnic Communities in Manipur

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- The people of Manipur are grouped into three main ethnic communities - **Meiteis** those inhabiting the valley and 29 major tribes in the hills dividing into two main ethno-denominations, namely **Nagas and Kuki-Chins**.
- The **Naga group** consists of Zeliangrong, Tangkhul, Mao, Maram, Maring and Tarao.
- The **Chin-Kuki group** consists of Gangte, Hmar, Paite, Thadou, Vaiphei, Zou, Aimol, Chiru, Koireng, Kom, Anal, Chothe, Lamgang, Koirao, Thangal, Moyon and Monsang.
- The term Chin is used for the people in the neighboring Chin state of Myanmar whereas Chins are called Kukis in the Indian side. Other groups like **Paite**, Zou, Gangte, and Vaiphei **identify themselves as Zomi** and have distanced themselves from the name, Kuki.
- It should be noted that all the different ethnic groups are of the same **Mongoloid group**, and have very close similarities in their culture and traditional habits.
- However, **Meiteis differ** culturally from the surrounding hill tribes by following **Hindu customs**.
- The legend of all tribes including Meiteis claim that they originated somewhere in the north from a cave.

**Source: IE**