



UNITED PEOPLE'S FRONT (UPF)
KUKI NATIONAL ORGANIZATION (KNO)
upfkno@gmail.com



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Press Release

Centre–Kuki Zo SoO Talks Resume in New Delhi After Two-Month Pause Amid Fresh Tensions in Manipur

New Delhi, 30 April 2026

Dialogue between the Union Government and Kuki-Zo armed groups under the Suspension of Operations (SoO) framework resumed on Thursday 30 April after nearly two months, as authorities attempt to stabilise a fragile security situation in Manipur following renewed ethnic flare-ups.

The meeting, convened by the Ministry of Home Affairs, marked the first formal engagement since tensions escalated again in parts of the state. It was led by AK Ajit Lal, the newly appointed Interlocutor for Northeast peace talks and a former senior Intelligence Bureau officer, who recently succeeded AK Mishra. Senior officials from the Intelligence Bureau, Security Forces, and the Manipur state administration—including the Home Secretary and Additional Director General of Police—were also present. Delegations from the Kuki National Organisation and the United People’s Front represented Kuki Zo armed groups that are signatories to the SoO agreement.

Marathon Talks in Two Phases:

The discussions stretched across a full day and were held in two detailed sessions.

Pre-lunch session: Talks focused on operational and security-related issues, particularly the location and functioning of designated camps housing SoO cadres. Both sides broadly agreed on the need to relocate certain camps to reduce friction with local populations and improve security issues.

Kuki Zo leaders also drew the attention of Ministry of Home Affairs officials to the prolonged unrest in Ukhrul district, claiming that their civilian population continues to live under constant fear of attacks by alleged Tangkhul militants. They further stated that numerous villages belonging to Kuki Zo civilians have been burnt over the past month, underscoring the urgency of security intervention and confidence-building measures.



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Post-lunch session: The dialogue shifted to core political demands, with Kuki Zo groups reiterating their long-standing demand for Union Territory with a legislature for the hill areas they inhabit.

Kuki Zo Demands: Return to Status Quo not tenable.

Representatives from the KNO and UPF presented a detailed case rooted in historical, political, and developmental grievances. They argued that the hill regions were never a part of erstwhile Manipur princely state. Separate administration existed prior to the colonialists take over. During colonial rule there was a separate Hill Area Administration. In independent India, the same was integrated in the administrative mechanism under Article 371C and the Hill Area Committee, but was rendered toothless by the skewed representation in the 60 seats Legislative Assembly of 53% of Meitei population with 40 seats, and tribals 43% with 20 seats.

Among the key concerns raised:

Persistent allegations of unequal development, with disproportionate allocation of resources to the Imphal Valley.

Severe infrastructure gaps in hill districts, including government installations, limited access to healthcare, education, roads, and drinking water.

The lasting trauma of the unprecedented state-enabled ethnic cleansing of Kuki Zo from 3 May 2023 in Imphal, Manipur, which resulted in the deaths of nearly 250 Kuki-Zo civilians, large-scale displacement, and destruction of homes and eradication of assets worth thousands of crores.

IDPs, particularly those still languishing in Relief Camps; inadequate compensation to construct houses.

Three years on, the total non-accountability of the state government to apprehend those responsible for the unprecedented state forces-led violent activities against Kuki Zo MLAs, government officers, civilians in localities in the heart of Imphal and across the valley district boundaries, namely Bishnupur, Imphal East, Imphal West, Thoubal, Kaching, and Jiribam.



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The groups emphasized the scale of violence and breakdown of trust between communities has made a return to pre-2023 status untenable. A Union Territory with legislative powers is the only viable framework for ensuring long-term security, political autonomy, and equitable development.

Government's Position:

Interlocutor AK Lal gave a patient hearing to the delegation's rationale for UT with Legislature and assured them that their concerns and political demands would be taken into consideration and conveyed to the highest levels of Government. The government reiterated its immediate priority to stabilise ground conditions—particularly through deployment of Central Forces, camp rationalisation and maintaining total absence of violence —while continuing dialogue for a broader political settlement within the Constitutional framework.

Recent weeks have seen sporadic incidents of unrest, underscoring the fragility of the situation. The resumption of talks is therefore a critical step in preventing further escalation and rebuilding trust. The long march to freedom has commenced.

The outcome of the political dialogue could ultimately prove pivotal for broader political efforts at peace-building in the aftershocks of one of its most severe ethnic conflicts in recent decades. The long march to freedom has commenced.

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