



Indigenous Tribal Leaders' Forum (ITLF)

Conglomerate of Recognised Tribes in Lamka, Outer Manipur

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PRESS RELEASE

The Indigenous Tribal Leaders Forum (ITLF) strongly condemns the Manipur State Government for supporting a proposal aimed at securing funding from the Ministry of Tribal Affairs in New Delhi for Meitei NGOs under the guise of tribal development. This distressing revelation uncovers a disturbing narrative of systematic injustice, corruption, and discrimination against the indigenous tribal communities of Manipur.

On October 23, 2023, Chief Minister N. Biren Singh submitted a proposal to Union Minister of Tribal Affairs, Arjun Munda, claiming to foster sustainable employment and self-reliance among Manipur's tribal population. The revelation that these projects amount to over 3 crores deepens the concern, given the sinister reality lurking behind these seemingly well-intentioned words.

The proposal, endorsed by the Manipur State Government, asserts that these Meitei (primarily General category) NGOs operate in remote tribal districts and areas. However, it is crucial to inform the Ministry of Tribal Affairs and Union Minister Shri Arjun Munda that the Kuki-Zo tribals are entirely oblivious to any projects or initiatives undertaken by these NGOs to date, purportedly for the betterment of the tribal communities.

It is our profound suspicion that these Meitei NGOs, conveniently headquartered in Imphal, are exploiting the tribal community as a means to secure project funds from the Centre, which the State Government can and likely will divert for their own undisclosed purposes.

This revelation, among other ominous aspects, includes an audacious demand by the Meiteis for Scheduled Tribe (ST) quota benefits, in an apparent attempt to capitalize on the financial advantages associated with this category. This is despite their existing classification and protection under the Scheduled Caste (SC) and Other Backward Class (OBC) categories.

The actions of the Manipur State Government and the allegations of exploitation by the Meitei NGOs shine a harsh light on Manipur's increasingly divided and troubled socio-political landscape where everything is for, by and of the Meitei.

The ITLF calls on the Ministry of Tribal Affairs, Government of India, to scrutinize this matter and ensure that the continued violation and denial of human rights & development and the neglect of constitutional principles by the Meitei-centric Manipur State Government are promptly addressed.

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