



SHARE

MANIPUR

CURRENT IMBROGLIO AND POLICY OPTIONS



**Society to Harmonise Aspirations for
Responsible Engagement**



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Executive Summary

The situation in the Indian state of Manipur remains volatile, to say the very least. While the pogrom against both the Meitei and the Kuki communities have stopped, sporadic cases of horrific violence continue till date. However, the genesis of the violence is historic with deep-rooted socio-cultural basis. Thus, resolving the situation on ground is a complicated and long-term project. Having said that, there are short term measures which need to be implemented with haste to curb down on violence and rehabilitate the internally displaced citizenry. With this recommendation paper, we at the Society to Harmonise Aspirations for Responsible Engagement (SHARE), propose both immediate and long-term policy options which are both implementable and rooted in the ground realities of the state for policymakers and civil society to consider.

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Introduction

*M*anipur continues to simmer since past 19 months with cycles of violence interspersed with fragile peace. The events of 03 May 2023 erupting in ethnic pogrom between the Meities and Kukis have left about 250 people dead, many missing and 1600 injured. Over 60,000 internally displaced people from both the communities have taken shelter in 272 relief camps. There has been extensive damage to public as well private properties caused by arson which are yet to be assessed for compensation. The state has seen compete polarization on ethnic lines that has spread to the bureaucracy as well as the state Police. There is anger and frustration amongst all the communities in Manipur in the absence of any headway in resolution of the conflict which many are claiming as war for honour and survival.

Background

*M*anipur with 23,356 Sq Km area and 3.2 million people, primarily comprises of three major communities; Meities who inhabit the Imphal Valley comprise 53% of the total population, Nagas who inhabit the higher reaches of the hills surrounding the valley and is 22% of total population, and the Kukis who inhabit the lower ridges of the hills surrounding the valley and is 16% of the population. As per 2011 census, Hindus constitute 41% of the population (a decrease from 62% in 1961), Christians constitute 41% (an increase from 19% in 1961) and 8% are Muslims, also known as Panghals. The Nagas and Kukis have ST status and follow the traditional customs with special land and forest rights. They occupy 90% of the total land while Meities are limited to 10% of the total area. The Meities claim to be the aboriginal peoples of the land with a history dating back to many centuries. Nagas also claims to be the original inhabitants while the Kukis have reportedly migrated from

The pressure on fertile valley land is a contributing factor towards the simmering unrest among Meities.

Myanmar during British rule. This last assertion is however contested by the Kukis. As per the land right arrangement, the Meities can not possess land in the hills while the Nagas and Kukis can do so in the valley. The pressure on fertile valley land is a contributing factor towards the simmering unrest among Meities. Some segment of the Meities didn't accept the merger of Manipur with India after the British left, resulting in an insurgency movement seeking independence. The Naga insurgency, which started immediately after India's independence, also engulfed the Naga dominated areas of Manipur with the Nagas demanding these as part of greater Nagalim. Early 1990s saw ethnic conflict between Nagas and Kukis following a diktat by United Naga Council, directing the Kukis to leave Naga areas, resulting in loss of more than thousand lives. It also gave birth to a number of Kuki militant groups who assumed the role of protector of Kuki interests. The legislature of the state comprises of 60 constituencies with 40 in Meitei dominated areas and 10 each in Naga and Kuki dominated areas. This has resulted in the domination of governance by the Meities, which in turn is manifested in lack of development and infrastructure in Kuki and Naga dominated areas, giving rise to the sentiments of marginalization of hill people.

The Insurgency movements led to imposition of the often-criticized Armed Forces (Special Power) Act of 1958 or AFSPA and subsequent conduct of Counter Insurgency (COIN) operations by the Indian Army and Assam Rifles. Due to historical linkages and people of same ethnicity living on both sides of the Indo-Myanmar Border (IMB), a special

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provision came into force which allowed people from the border areas to cross the border with headloads up to 16 kms. This is the Free Move Regime (FMR), which was intended to be an enabling provision but was misused by non-state actors by resorting to smuggling, narcotics trade, weapon running, etc. The insurgent groups also established their camps in Myanmar and took advantage of the porous border to carry out extortion and violence in Manipur and flee across the IMB for shelter. The civil society organisations in Manipur have traditionally been very active taking up social as well as community issues with the government and other agencies. The Meira Paibis or the women torch bearers came into being as social organisation against alcohol abuse and drug addictions but became active protagonists taking up all societal issues including that of human right violations and alleged excesses by security forces. Some suggest that the group at times also resort to moral policing. With focused COIN operations, 25 Kuki groups under two conglomerations signed an agreement in 2008 with the Government of Manipur and the Union Government with provisions for Suspension of Operations (SoO). As per the agreement, the cadres of these groups were allotted designated camps with ground rules that were to be adhered to. Their weapons and warlike stores, less the ones required for camp protection, were secured within the camp with provisions of periodic inspection and verification by

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the security forces. Nonadherence to the SoO ground rules by the cadres and allegations of them resorting to extortion, narcotics trade and illegal poppy cultivation has been one of the major issues raised by the state government. However, with reduction in violence parameters and improvement in law-and-order situation, the state started progressing towards normalcy with the historic move to remove AFSPA from 19 Police Stations in the valley areas and return of vibrant sports and cultural ecosystem. But below the façade of normalcy, an age-old mistrust was festering which was further aggravated by unemployment, pressures on land in the valley, perceived negligence the Kuki and Naga communities and systemic corruption, thus continuing to threaten peaceful coexistence of the three communities.

With this backdrop, a fierce faceoff between with the two communities was a matter of time. Thus, the present situation, as detailed below should not have been a surprise for anyone who understood the terrain, human and otherwise.

Present Situation

The schism grew when the state government started eviction drive from some of the forest land and targeted illegal poppy cultivation. The Meities also alleged that about 996 “illegal” villages have been established by Kukis in recent times and thousands of Kuki people have migrated from Myanmar, thus further disturbing the population balance in the state. Control of border town of Moreh, the hub of illegal trade and smuggling from Myanmar by armed cadres of Kuki SoO groups also became a bone of contention among competing groups of Meitei insurgents. On the other side, the unilateral abrogation of SoO by the Manipur state government with the Kuki groups was also intolerable to the Kuki population. Meanwhile demand for ST status by the Meities started gaining currency with the High Court asking the Manipur government to consider the issue. This was opposed by the Kukis, who decided to take out a protest march at Churachandpur on 03 May 2023. The march turned violent and provided the trigger for large scale arson and burning of villages. The violence spread to the entire valley and the hills resulting in killing of hundreds of people and large exodus of

The conflict provided relevance to the insurgent groups of both communities who took on the role of “community defenders.”

people who took shelter in relief camps. The battle lines were drawn with all Kukis moving out from Imphal valley and the Meities moving out from the hills dominated by Kukis resulting in formation of ethnicity-based enclaves. After the initial period of violence, the conflict continued in fringe areas/foothills adjoining the Imphal valley. All segments of the Kuki and Meitie society including the Insurgent Groups, civil society and common people got involved and/or affected by the conflict. There were roadblocks and check points established by both communities which can still be seen in some places. Both the communities provided protection to the miscreants of their communities to the extent that on number of occasions the security forces were prevented from going to sensitive areas which enabled the malefactors to resort to arson and then make a quick getaway. The conflict provided relevance to the insurgent groups of both communities who took on the role of “community defenders.” With passage of time and no signs of normalcy, the people got frustrated, particularly the people displaced from their own houses. The conflict has impacted education, health care as also normal sustenance of the common people. The state continues to pass through sporadic violence interspersed with short periods of relative peace, if one could call it so. The Nagas in this case have displayed restraint and have generally remained neutral during the conflict, having taken the stance that there

would be no compromise on their territorial integrity. Their leadership has made it clear that any peace negotiation or a separate administrative set up for hills which disturb the question of Naga autonomy will not be acceptable to them.

The latest escalation following the abduction and killing of women and children, alleged killing of ten miscreants also termed as militants in Jiribam area has again made the Administration search for urgent measures to control violence. The immediate results of the violence were arson and rioting with targeting of properties of Ministers and Legislators in the valley. Reimposition of AFSPA in six Police Stations in the fringe areas of the Imphal valley following the violence has solicited contrarian demands from both communities highlighting the differing perceptions. The union Home minister called for review meeting and decided to send 20 more companies of CAPF into the state. The situation has become tense again underscoring the pressing need to strive for a permanent resolution of the vexed problem.

There are numerous factors responsible for recurrence of violence. Firstly, there is complete mistrust amongst the two communities involved in the conflict, resulting in total polarization and delineation of areas of influence among both. Any attempts to change the status quo have resulted in violence by armed miscreants. The situation has been exploited by the radicalized elements within both the communities who have started driving the narrative. Secondly, the easy availability of weapons and warlike stores to both the communities, from across the IMB and/or from the weapons looted from Police Stations, have resulted in a militarised society believing

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power of Gun being the only solution resulting in incendiary situation ready to burn at slightest spark.

Third important factor in this battleground is the intense information and misinformation campaign by leveraging sundry social media platforms, messaging apps, and traditional media, which are responsible for mobilizing the masses for continued violence. This digital frontline has significantly shaped perceptions of the conflict and complicated efforts to address the underlying tensions. Social media intermediaries like Facebook, Twitter, and WhatsApp have become key vectors for both legitimate information sharing and the rapid spread of unverified claims and deliberate disinformation. Pro-Meitei and pro-Kuki accounts frequently post conflicting narratives about violent incidents, often making unsubstantiated allegations about the other community's involvement. Graphic images and videos purporting to show violence are widely shared, though their authenticity and context are often difficult to verify.

In this context, a major challenge has been the proliferation of old or unrelated images and videos being presented as current events in Manipur. For instance, footage from other conflicts or even movie scenes have been misrepresented as depicting recent violence between the communities. This recycling of malicious content fuels tensions and often paints a distorted picture of the scale

This artificial inflation of certain viewpoints can create a skewed perception of public opinion and community stances.

and nature of the conflict. Automated bot networks and coordinated inauthentic behavior have also played a role in amplifying certain narratives. Analysis by disinformation researchers has uncovered networks of accounts engaging in coordinated posting of pro-Meitei or pro-Kuki content, often using similar language and sharing the same unverified claims. This artificial inflation of certain viewpoints can create a skewed perception of public opinion and community stances.

The role of encrypted messaging apps like WhatsApp in spreading both information and misinformation has been particularly significant. The privacy afforded by these platforms makes it challenging to track the origin and spread of false claims. Voice messages and forwarded texts claiming to provide “insider information” about planned attacks or government actions have contributed to panic and knee-jerk responses.

Traditional media outlets have struggled to provide consistent, verified reporting from the ground, owing to both internet shutdowns as well as safety concerns for journalists. This information vacuum has been filled by citizen journalists and community-specific news portals, which often lack rigorous fact-checking processes and may have inherent biases.

As Manipur continues to struggle to gain any semblance of normalcy, both state and non-state actors have engaged in deliberate information warfare tactics. There have

been accusations of state-sponsored disinformation campaigns aimed at shaping the narrative around the conflict. Meanwhile, various interest groups have leveraged the situation to push broader political agendas, often by framing the conflict in terms that align with their objectives. The spread of misinformation has had tangible impacts on the ground. False rumors of impending attacks have led to preemptive violence and population displacements. Manipulated narratives about the destruction of religious sites have inflamed communal tensions. Misrepresented statements by public figures have been used to justify further hostilities.

Efforts to combat misinformation have included fact-checking initiatives by civil society organisations and media outlets. However, these often struggle to keep pace with the volume and speed of misinformation. Some social media platforms have implemented measures to flag potentially false content, but their effectiveness in the specific context of Manipur has been limited. The government has responded to the information warfare challenge through periodic internet shutdowns and restrictions on social media usage. While aimed at curbing the spread of inflammatory content, these measures have also hampered legitimate information sharing and coordination of relief efforts.

The situation on ground has taken a dramatic turn with the recent escalation where reported use of weaponized drones to drop bombs and use of sophisticated missiles is surely a cause of concern. The intensification continuum has resulted in frustration and desperation amongst the people resulting in mass strikes and protests, which may go out of hand at

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the slightest provocation. The security forces, despite best of efforts have not been able to control the cycles of violence. The polarized police are a major roadblock in dealing with the situation. Lack of confidence in the Chief Minister and the state Government in dealing with the situation among the Kukis have been the one of the stumbling blocks for initiation of dialogue between the two communities from beginning of the conflict. In fact, one of the main demands of Kukis have been to remove the CM whom they hold responsible for the conflict.

The Union Government, on its part, has been making numerous efforts towards resolution of the conflict in Manipur, right from the time insurgency movements broke out in 60s. Concerted efforts by security forces and the Government has resulted in ceasefire/SoO agreements with various groups over the years, leading to return of peace and normalcy and revocation of AFSPA from 19 Police Stations in the valley area. The present conflict too has been given due importance which is borne out by the fact that the Union Home Minister spent three days in June 2023 to personally supervise efforts to restore normalcy. Efforts have been made in improving intelligence collection and conduct of synergized operations by the Indian Army, Assam Rifles, CAPFs and State Police with focus on controlling violence and targeting the miscreants. Formation of Unified Headquarters in May

2023 and appointment of Security Adviser as also change of Chief Secretary and DGP are some other steps taken to ensure return of normalcy. Provision of succor to the internally displaced people in the relief camps included ensuring supply of essential commodities including improved health care and special provisions for students displaced by the conflict to pursue their studies. The Union Government appears to be now following Five Way Path; Construction of Border Fence, Scrapping of FMR, Strategic deployment of CRPF, plugging sensitive gaps along the IMB and holding talks with both communities. The meeting called by the Union Home Ministry on 15 October 2024 of elected representatives of all three communities; Meities, Kukis and Nagas, is a step in the right direction towards resolution of the conflict.

While these steps are all well intended, they are yet to manifest the desired outcome, which is the restoration of normalcy in the state of Manipur. A key factor behind this is that many of these steps seems to be a superimposition of a standard template which may not always be contextually relevant to Manipur. The following section attempts to plug this essential gap in policymaking and conflict resolution by attempting to put forth both contextually pertinent and operationally implementable solutions through a set of recommendations.

Recommendations

The conflict in Manipur has continued unabated impacting life of the common people. This has necessitated a whole-of-government approach where both the Centre and State comes together and work towards an early resolution of the situation. The reconciliation process should comprise of an array of measures aiming to ensure return of normalcy. We at SHARE put forward a set of recommendations, which in our view are not just implementable but are also imperative to attain the state goal of all parties, peace. These recommendations are classified into short-term and long-term for ease of appreciation.

Short Term Recommendations

The first and foremost requirement is to **control the violence**. The security forces must take resolute measures against all the miscreants irrespective of their ethnicity. Complete sealing of the IMB must be ensured to prevent the movement of personnel as well as warlike stores into Manipur. The flash points which have seen violence since the beginning of the conflict must be sanitised with preponderance of security

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forces. The lines of communication within the state need to be kept open with uninterrupted movement of essential supplies to all areas without any bias. The so-called buffer zones between the two communities must be dominated extensively by the security forces to prevent flare-up of violence. Area domination exercises through basic tactics of flag marches, regular patrolling and check points should be ensured to deny free movement of armed miscreants and act as a deterrent to any nefarious designs. A bias towards intelligence-based kinetic operations to recover weapons and to arrest armed miscreants is a critical gap in the current approach which needs to be plugged with haste. This is only possible by working together with and within the communities. For this to happen, confidence building measures is a must. One such measure would be the immediate restoration/reconstruction of places of worship destroyed during the conflict by engaging other pillars of civil administration. It needs to be appreciated that the maintenance of peace in the state cannot be perpetually outsourced to central forces or the military. Thus, capacity building of State Police to undertake their designated tasks must be ensured. To prevent exploitation of the de notified areas by the miscreants for inimical activities, AFSPA may be re-imposed in certain selected areas as a deterrent.

The next important aspect is **confidence building**

among people from both communities. There is a definite need to provide the much-needed healing touch for **soothing the nerves by intervention from the highest possible level.** Contentious issues such as NRC, ST status for Meities and land eviction drive in hill districts must be frozen temporarily till restoration of peace.

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These issues need to be resolved amicably in the long run. All the stakeholders must be engaged proactively to encourage dialogue. The message of peace must be communicated to the communities with emphasis on dividends of Democratic Patience for resolution of grievances. Community leaders and influencers must engage the radicalized elements within both communities to bring them to path of reconciliation. The Union and State Governments must make genuine efforts at resolving the grievances of both the communities. The enquiries commission instituted by the Union Government must complete their mandate early and CBI cases lodged during the conflict must see closure soon to re-instill confidence on the rule of law amongst the people. The day-to-day problems of internally displaced people belonging to both communities staying in the numerous relief camps related to supply of essential commodities like food, water, power supply, hygiene and sanitation, education and healthcare must be addressed on priority. A fair and inclusive compensation mechanism need to be instituted for assessment

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and disbursement to only the genuine beneficiaries. Constitution of a Peace and Reconciliation Committee with neutral members acceptable to all stakeholders to engage both the communities is need of the hour.

While attempting to resolve the conflict, it is important to **lay down certain redlines** to ensure no compromise on Sovereignty, Territorial Integrity and Constitutional Safeguards. That there should be no redrawing of boundaries and territorial integrity of Manipur, needs to be retained. The land and forest rights of the tribals must

remain in force in present form to address their sensitivities. The implementation of Forest Rights Act of 2006 in letter and spirit is an important step in this direction. The International Border must be respected with adherence to all the protocols as laid down from time to time. The IMB must be dominated in a robust manner to prevent infiltration. Drug trafficking must be curbed at all costs. All weapons in custody of both the communities must be surrendered, and SoO and other ceasefire agreements must be honoured by all parties. The extortion racket must stop at all costs and illegal funding from all external sources, if any, must also cease completely.

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Long Term Recommendations

Manipur has seen cycles of violence since independence and hence there is a need of **Empowering the State Administration** including capacity building and training of State Police to evolve a coordinated response mechanism to deal with such contingencies.

A long-term strategy needs to be evolved to **enhance communal harmony** to facilitate peaceful coexistence of all three communities: Meitis, Kukis and Nagas. Contentious issues like NRC, ST status to Meities, review of land and forest rights in hill areas, separate administration/autonomy for Kuki areas need to be deliberated with all stakeholders to evolve consensus and then strive for solution acceptable to all. The Peace and Reconciliation Committee, referred earlier, must look at long term resolution of the legacy issues between Kukis and Meities. It is also important to keep in mind the sensitivities of Naga community while trying to find an amicable solution to the present conflict. Focused backchannel negotiations must precede dialogue between the two communities which should be led by the Union Government.

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Initiate talks with all the insurgent groups including VBIGs, all factions of Meitei, Naga and Kuki groups. Temporary arrangements like SoO and ceasefire agreements must be made irrelevant by going for permanent resolution of

To address the polarization of bureaucracy and police it is suggested to create a Northeast Cadre for IAS, IPS as well as the state-level bureaucracy of all eight states of the region.

the issues. Designated camps for insurgent groups in talks and possession of arms by these groups must be avoided. All arms and other warlike stores of these groups must be in custody of security forces while addressing the security concerns of these groups and their leaders. Presence and normalisation of armed civilians must be done away with, almost ruthlessly. Concerted efforts must be made to identify and choke the source of funding of various insurgents' groups as well as their front organisations.

Focused improvement of infrastructure and connectivity within the state need to be undertaken to ensure comprehensive development of all areas. Early completion and commissioning of railway connectivity to Imphal Valley must be ensured. Improvement of National Highway 2 and 37 for uninterrupted connectivity with rest of the country must be given due priority. Helicopter service to remote areas may also be considered.

Enhancement of border infrastructure is needed to ensure robust border management. The decision to construct Border fencing along the entire Myanmar border and scrapping of FMR taken by the Government of India is suggested to be a necessary step from security perspective. However, a more nuanced approach needs to be taken keeping in mind the sensitivities of tribal population inhabiting both sides of the border. The loopholes in the provisions that are

being exploited by miscreants for resorting to illegal activities like smuggling, weapon running and narcotics trade must surely be addressed though.

To address the **polarization** of bureaucracy and police it is suggested to create a Northeast Cadre for IAS, IPS as well as the state-level bureaucracy of all eight states of the region. Existing state cadres among the Northeast states may be merged and amalgamated to form a new Northeast Cadre. This will ensure a sense of ownership for the entire region amongst the cadres and address the issue of polarization on ethnic lines in dealing with any problem. This will also provide continuity of policy and implementation which is a major challenge within the current cadre system of the bureaucracy.

The core problem of unemployment must be addressed by adequate focus on **employment generation** by skilling and initial handholding. Issues of limited government jobs and lack of employment generating investments need to be addressed by empowering the locals to start new ventures based on available local resources. Afforestation drive involving the communities to generate jobs and income can be one of the solutions. Lessons may be drawn from the various public and private employment generation initiatives taken in India's Red Corridor which

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The Manipur situation highlights the complex interplay between online information ecosystems and on-the-ground conflict dynamics in the digital age. The ease with which misinformation can be generated and spread poses significant challenges for conflict resolution and peacebuilding efforts. It underscores the need for digital literacy initiatives, robust fact-checking mechanisms, and responsible use of social media platforms in conflict-prone regions. As the situation evolves, **addressing the information warfare dimension** will be crucial to any lasting resolution. This will require cooperation between tech companies, government agencies, media outlets, and civil society organisations to create a more resilient information environment that can withstand attempts at manipulation and distortion. Appropriate non-invasive regulatory mechanism applicable in such conflict zones need to be evolved through a process of consultation with important stakeholders.

Conclusion

The continuing cycles of violence in Manipur is a cause of concern and needs early resolution would be an understatement given the gravity of the situation. Though the Union Government and the security forces have tried to arrest the violence leading to negotiations and peaceful resolution, stray incidents have somehow reignited the violence every time some progress is made. Further, the demand of one community for change of leadership in the state remains a persistent plea. Notwithstanding this and other demands, it must be recognized by both the warring communities that violence has no place in a civilized society and all grievances whether actual or perceived, need to be resolved through dialogue and negotiations in a democratic set up. Giving up arms and being prepared for across the table dialogue is the best way forward. While the State and Union Governments are responsible for ensuring peace and stability, the civil societies and community leaders also need to play their role in finding lasting solutions.

SHARE MEMBERS



Chairperson: The Chairperson shall provide overall leadership, guide strategic direction and organisational priorities and represent the organisation at high-level forums. They shall lead policy development, engage in advocacy efforts and liaison with government and key stakeholders.

Shri Radha Krishna Mathur, former IAS Officer (batch of 1977) shall preside as the Chairperson of the organisation. Shri Mathur was the first Lieutenant Governor of Ladakh from 2019 to 2023. He was also the Chief Information Commissioner prior to heading the UT of Ladakh. He served the Govt. of Tripura for about 15 years and was the Chief Secy. of the state before joining Government of India where he served as the Secy. of MSME, Secy. of Defence Production and finally as the Defence Secy. of the Govt. of India. His contribution to the modernisation of the Indian Armed Forces is widely recognised both nationally and internationally. In Tripura, several path breaking initiatives were taken by him.

Vice Chairperson: Lt. Gen RP Kalita (Retd) Former General Officer Commanding, Eastern Command, Indian Army, is the Vice Chairperson of SHARE. Lt. Gen. Kalita, PVSM, UYSM, AVSM, SM, VSM (ret'd) has served for four decades the Indian Army in almost all its operational spectrums ranging from counter insurgency operations (COIN), to leading a Mountain Brigade, an Infantry Division, and a Corp. in NEI before taking charge as GOC-in-C, Eastern Command. He has had two tenures with the UN to Sierra Leone and Sudan. He is widely respected for his doctrinal depth on strategic affairs. He shall assist the Chairperson and shall lead all specific projects and initiatives related to defence and security.



General Secretary: The General Secretary will manage the operations while overseeing implementation of programs across the organisation, ensuring alignment with organisational objectives. **Shri Bhaskar J Mahanta**, IPS (Retd), former DGP Assam, (HoPF) and the Chief Information Commissioner Assam, is the current General Secretary of SHARE. A highly decorated officer, he is widely acknowledged for the pivotal role he played in ushering peace in Assam. Along with his expertise in COIN, he has been a key player in transforming Assam Police into a citizen-centric, service-delivery force. His work in developing and implementing rehabilitation programs for victims of violence has been universally appreciated, including by UNICEF. He is also a national award-winning filmmaker and an accomplished writer. Apart from holding office as the General Secretary, he will also be looking at Geopolitical Affairs.



Lead for Global Affairs, Governing Body:

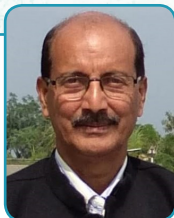
Shri Harsh Vardhan Shringla, IFS (Retd) was the Chief Coordinator for India's G20 Presidency, former Foreign Secretary of India, former Indian Ambassador to Thailand & the USA and High Commissioner to Bangladesh. He was critical in promoting India's Neighbourhood First and Look East policies. He was a key pillar in the success of India's G20 Presidency where he took the G20 to India's hinterlands, including NEI. He has carved a niche for himself in developing strategic alliances, thereby, putting India firmly on the global map and shall lead Global Affairs within the organisation.



Lead for Trade & Connectivity: Shri Nazeeb Arif,

Executive VP & Head of Corp. Communications, ITC Limited, leads the Trade & Connectivity vertical. With nearly four decades of experience in business and industry, he has promoted sub-regional economic co-operation that puts NEI

at its core. He is a recipient of the prestigious United States Asia Environmental Partnership – Environmental Leadership Award. Before joining ITC, he was the Secretary General & CEO of the Indian Chamber of Commerce. He is known to be a champion of sustainable development in the business world.



Lead, Area Studies: Dr. Samudra Gupta Kashyap,

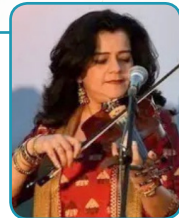
Historian & Chancellor, Nagaland University, heads the vertical of Area Studies. A widely acclaimed scholar and journalist, Dr. Kashyap has to his credit four decades of reporting NEI to the outside world. Author of several books primarily focused on NEI and S/SEA, he is acknowledged to have ushered in systemic changes in Nagaland University. A distinguished alumnus of Indian Institute of Mass Communication, New Delhi, he holds a PhD Degree in Management.



Treasurer and Lead, Critical & Emerging Technology: Shri Subimal Bhattacharjee,

Tech Policy Adviser and Columnist, leads the vertical of Critical & Emerging Technology. Shri Bhattacharjee is a well-known policy adviser on technology and security issues. He has been a

member of the advisory committee of Global Commission on Internet Governance. He has also served as a policy expert on two UN led programs on the subject of critical and emerging technology. He is a regular contributor to several print and TV media organisations in India, on all matters pertaining to technology. Previously, he was the Country Head of General Dynamics, India. He also presides as the treasurer of the organisation, financial planning, budgets and ensures financial accountability.



Lead, Culture Studies: Smt. Sunita Bhuyan, violinist & HR Professional, leads the vertical of Culture Studies. A renowned violinist, she regularly performs around the globe. She is also the Chief Mentor of Atos Prayas Foundation, a visiting faculty of IIM Shillong on Music and Aesthetics & CEDEP France and is also a consulting practitioner for various prestigious forums and organisations. She was awarded by Pope Francis at the Vatican City for her work on music therapy with underprivileged children, cancer patients and people with disability.



Lead, Research & Admin: This will be headed by Shri Abhijan Das. Shri Das has been involved in national security affairs for over a decade, counterterrorism being one of his key focuses. He also has a decade of consulting experience working with Fortune 100 companies. He has completed his M.Sc. in Strategic Studies from S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies, Nanyang Technological University, Singapore with specialisation in Terrorism Studies. He looks at research initiatives, managing project teams and resources as well as general administration.



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