

President's Rule in Manipur

Posted at: 15/02/2025

President's Rule in Manipur: Context, Implications, and Constitutional Provisions

Context

Manipur has been witnessing **prolonged ethnic violence and political instability**, leading to the collapse of the **BJP-led state government** and the imposition of **President's Rule under Article 356**. The crisis stems from **ethnic conflicts between the Meitei and Kuki-Zo communities**, displacement of thousands of people, and the failure of governance in restoring peace.

The situation escalated when:

- **Chief Minister N. Biren Singh resigned on February 9, 2025**, following discussions with **Union Home Minister Amit Shah** and **BJP President J.P. Nadda**.
- **Coalition partners, NPP and KPA, withdrew support**, citing the government's failure to handle the ethnic conflict.
- **The State Assembly had not convened for over six months**, leading to **suspended animation** under President's Rule.

This marks the **11th time President's Rule has been imposed in Manipur**, the last instance being in **2001-02**.

President's Rule: Constitutional Provisions and Implications

Article 356 and President's Rule

As per **Article 356** of the Indian Constitution:

- The **President can impose President's Rule** if the **Governor reports that the state government is unable to function in accordance with constitutional provisions**.
- The **Governor of Manipur, Ajay Kumar Bhalla, submitted a report**, based on which the **President took action**.

Duration and Parliamentary Approval

- **President's Rule remains in force for two months** unless approved by **both Houses of Parliament**.
- **Once approved, it can be extended up to six months**.

- It cannot extend beyond three years, with parliamentary approval required every six months.
- The President can revoke it at any time through a subsequent proclamation.

Consequences of President's Rule

- The state government's functions are taken over by the Centre.
- The Governor administers the state on behalf of the President.
- The powers of the State Legislature are transferred to Parliament.
- The functioning of the High Court remains unaffected.

Judicial Review: S.R. Bommai Case (1994)

- The Supreme Court ruled that President's Rule is subject to judicial review.
- The President cannot dissolve the State Legislative Assembly without parliamentary approval.
- Until approval is obtained, the assembly remains suspended, not dissolved.

Reasons for President's Rule in Manipur

1. Ethnic Conflict and Law and Order Breakdown

- Violence between Meitei and Kuki-Zo communities since May 2023 has led to the displacement of over 60,000 people.
- Armed groups, known as "village volunteers", have looted weapons from police stations, leading to militarization of civil society.

2. Political Instability

- The BJP-led government lost majority support after coalition partners NPP and KPA withdrew.
- The Congress had threatened to introduce a no-confidence motion against the government.

3. Failure to Convene the State Assembly

- The Manipur Legislative Assembly had not met for over six months, violating parliamentary norms.
- As a result, the Assembly was placed under suspended animation.

4. Inability to Restore Normalcy

- The Biren Singh government was seen as biased in handling ethnic tensions.
- Previous efforts to retrieve looted weapons and restore order had failed.

Implications of President's Rule in Manipur

Restoring Law and Order

- The Union Home Ministry will now directly oversee security operations.
- Armed groups, including insurgent elements from Myanmar, need to be disarmed.
- Special efforts must be made to retrieve looted weapons and prosecute offenders.

Rehabilitation and Peace Efforts

- Over 60,000 displaced individuals require urgent relief and resettlement.
- The Centre must initiate peace talks between Meitei and Kuki-Zo community leaders.
- Restoring trust in governance is essential for long-term stability.

Political and Administrative Stability

- Fresh elections should be held at an appropriate time once normalcy is restored.
- Ethnic representation in governance must be balanced to prevent further conflicts.
- Strict neutrality in governance is crucial to rebuilding trust among communities.

Conclusion

The imposition of **President's Rule in Manipur** highlights the **failure of the state government to maintain law and order**. While it provides an **opportunity for the Centre to restore peace and stability**, it also **underscores the deep-rooted ethnic divisions in the state**. Moving forward, the **Union government must ensure effective governance, rehabilitation, and reconciliation efforts before considering fresh elections**. The success of this intervention will depend on the government's ability to **neutralize armed groups, restore public confidence, and create a path for long-term stability in Manipur**.

