

# Kuki-Zo groups end shutdown of Manipur's National Highways

Kuki-Zo Council vows to continue opposition to Home Ministry's push for free movement on all roads in Manipur, it seeks separate administration; highways had been shut since the death of a protestor in Kangpokpi clashes with security forces

The Hindu Bureau  
NEW DELHI

**T**he Kuki-Zo Council (KZC) ended the community's shutdown of the National Highways passing through Manipur's hill districts on Thursday, following the burial of a protestor who was killed in clashes on March 8. Movement of commercial vehicles resumed on National Highways no. 2 and 37 on Thursday evening.

However, the apex body of the Kuki-Zo community insisted that it would continue to oppose the government's decision to reopen all roads across the strife-hit State. "While the shutdown has been lifted, the free movement, as announced by the Home Ministry shall be vehemently

opposed by the Kuki-Zo people, as it undermines and dilutes the justice process," the KZC said in a statement.

Kuki-Zo protestor Lalgouthang Singsit was killed on March 8 when Kuki-Zo people in Kangpokpi district clashed with Central security forces over the enforcement of the decision to permit free movement of all vehicles on National Highways. Following his death, even the movement of commercial vehicles had been blocked by Kuki-Zo protesters for the past five days. A prolonged blockade would affect the supply of essential commodities to the Meitei-dominated valley districts.

The KZC emphasised its commitment to the cause of a separate administration of the State's hill dis-



Intelligence-based combing operations are being carried out in Manipur to recover all the looted weapons in the State. PTI

tricts, although visiting Central government officials reiterated, during a meeting with Kuki-Zo bodies in Churachandpur on March 11, that such a move is not agreeable.

## Pushing for peace

On Thursday, six Naga MLAs met Governor Ajay Kumar Bhalla to apprise

him of the hardships faced by their community due to the tense situation in Manipur, and to push for peace. They pledged support for any initiative to restore peace and normalcy.

"They assured [the Governor] that they will extend their cooperation in every step to ensure peace, and also exuded confi-

dence that the State will definitely return to peace and normalcy under the leadership of the Governor," the Raj Bhavan said, in a statement.

The six MLAs were Awangbow Newmal, Khashim Vashum, Losli Dikho, Leishiyo Keishing, J. Kumo Sha, and Janghemlung Panmei.

Representatives of the Churachandpur Meitei United Committee, led by its co-convenor Naba Ningthoujam, also met the Governor and submitted a memorandum requesting him to take steps for the welfare of internally displaced people from Churachandpur district who are now living in various relief camps.

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# Putin backs truce idea, but calls for more talks with U.S.

We agree with the proposals to cease hostilities, but this cessation should lead to long-term peace and eliminate the original causes of this crisis, Putin says, adding he might call Trump for talks

Reuters  
Associated Press  
MOSCOW

President Vladimir Putin said on Thursday that Russia agreed with U.S. proposals for a ceasefire in Ukraine but that any ceasefire would have to deal with the root causes of the conflict and that many details needed to be sorted out.

"We agree with the proposals to cease hostilities," Mr. Putin told reporters at a news conference in the Kremlin following talks with Belarusian President Alexander Lukashenko.

"But we proceed from the fact that this cessation should be such that it would lead to long-term peace and would eliminate the original causes of this crisis." Russian forces have been advancing since mid-2024 and control nearly a fifth of Ukraine's territory, three years into a war that U.S. President Donald



**Rigid stance:** Vladimir Putin visits a command point for the Kursk group of troops involved in the offensive in the Kursk region. AFP

Trump has said he will halt. Mr. Trump had said in the White House on Wednesday that he hoped the Kremlin would agree to the U.S. proposal for a 30-day ceasefire that Ukraine said it would support, to end what Trump called the "bloodbath".

Mr. Putin thanked Mr. Trump for his efforts to end the war. "The idea itself is correct, and we certainly support it," Mr. Putin said. "But there are issues

that we need to discuss. And I think we need to talk to our American colleagues as well." Mr. Putin said he might call Mr. Trump to discuss the issue. "We support the idea of ending this conflict by peaceful means."

He noted that Ukrainian troops are encircled in their last foothold in Russia's Kursk region, and it's necessary to determine before a ceasefire whether they will lay down wea-

pons and surrender.

He also noted the need to develop a mechanism to control possible breaches of the truce. Another issue, he said, is whether Ukraine could use the 30-day ceasefire to continue mobilization and rearmament.

Mr. Putin noted that while it appeared that the U.S. persuaded Ukraine to accept a ceasefire, Ukraine is interested in that because of the battlefield situation, noting that Ukrainian troops that launched an incursion into Russia's Kursk region would be fully blocked in the coming days. "In these conditions, I believe it would be good for the Ukrainian side to secure a ceasefire for at least 30 days," he said.

Meanwhile, the Russian Defense Ministry claimed that it recaptured the town of Sudzha, a Ukrainian operational hub in Kursk, hours after Mr. Putin visited his commanders in Kursk.



# ISRO undocks SpaDex satellites in first attempt

Satellites are orbiting independently and their health is normal, says space agency; on January 16, ISRO successfully executed satellites' docking, making India the fourth country to achieve the feat

**The Hindu Bureau**  
BENGALURU

Nearly two months after the Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) carried out the docking of the two satellites which are part of the Space Docking Experiment (SpaDeX) mission, the space agency on Thursday accomplished their undocking.

The space agency said that it had accomplished the feat in its very first attempt. The undocking operation was executed at 9.20 a.m.

"The undocking of the satellites took place in a 460 km circular orbit with 45-degree inclination. The satellites are now orbiting independently and their health is normal," the agency said.

"With this, ISRO has now successfully demonstrated all the capabilities required for rendezvous, docking and undocking operations in a circular orbit."

It said that the in-orbit performance of the docked satellites was extensively analysed and an immediate opportunity was



**Mission accomplished:** On-board images of SpaDex undocking, ISRO

found to be feasible from March 10 to 25.

"All operations were monitored through ground stations located in Bengaluru, Lucknow and Mauritius. Having accomplished this major milestone of undocking, further experiments with satellites are planned for the coming days," the ISRO said.

It further said that exhaustive ground simulations and analysis were the cornerstones of achieving the undocking in the first attempt itself. "Various tests replicating on-orbit conditions were meticulously planned and carried out in preparation for the earliest opportunity for undocking operations," it said.

On January 16, the ISRO successfully executed the

**Having accomplished the undocking, more experiments are planned for coming days, says ISRO**

SpaDeX docking experiment, making India the fourth country after the U.S., Russia and China to achieve this historic feat.

The two satellites SDX01 (Chaser) and SDX02 (Target), which were launched by the PSLV C60 on December 30, were successfully docked on January 16.

Following this historic feat, the space agency had said that the undocking would be carried out in the coming days.

The SpaDeX mission is an important project by the ISRO. It is designed to

develop and demonstrate the technology needed for spacecraft rendezvous, docking and undocking using two small satellites.

## Objectives of mission

The demonstration of this technology is essential for futuristic missions such as sending an Indian astronaut to the moon, returning samples from the moon, and building and operation of an Indian Space Station.

The other objectives of the SpaDeX mission include demonstration of the transfer of electric power between the docked spacecraft, which is essential for future applications, such as in-space robotics, composite spacecraft control and payload operations after undocking.



# Over 3,200 PMJAY hospitals must be penalised for fraud, regulation is required: NHA

**Bindu Shajan Perappadan**  
NEW DELHI

Almost 600 hospitals across India should be suspended and another 1,113 removed from the panel of the Centre's flagship health insurance scheme, and penalties totalling ₹122 crore should be levied against 1,504 errant hospitals, according to recommendations made by the National Health Authority's anti-fraud unit.

Noting the unit's report on the misuse of funds under the Ayushman Bharat Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojana (AB-PMJAY), the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Health and Family Welfare expressed concern about the way some hospitals were carrying out such fraudulent activities as part of their business model.



**Vital scheme:** AB-PMJAY benefits about 12.37 crore families in the country.

Regulation is needed to check such fraud, the committee said in its report on the Demand for Grants tabled in Parliament on March 12.

AB-PMJAY provides annual health coverage worth ₹5 lakh per family for secondary and tertiary care hospitalisation, benefiting about 12.37 crore families from the economically vulnerable bottom

40% of India's population.

In its reply to the committee's report, the Department of Health and Family Welfare noted that the National Health Authority (NHA) has adopted a zero-tolerance policy towards fraud and abuse, and has taken steps to prevent, detect, and deter different kinds of fraud at various stages of AB-PMJAY's implementation.

The committee recommended that the NHA implement a proactive, data-driven, and transparent monitoring system focusing on early detection of potential misuse patterns in AB-PMJAY.

The department can consider making extensive use of artificial intelligence and digital tools during the collection and analysis of statistical data and feedback, it added.