Insurgency across the eastern frontier

What is the issue?

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- Increasingly, co-operation among various militant groups has been noted in the north-eastern region.
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- This, combined with the porous boundary along Myanmar increases the challenge of effectively controlling these groups.
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Why is the North-eastern region prone to insurgency?

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- The seven sister states are predominantly tribal with some states having more than 90% tribal populations.
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- The forest laws since the British times became intrusive & drastically affected their livelihoods & culture.
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- The diversity within even small territories proved to be difficult to accommodate within the same political administration.
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- This led to numerous demands, ranging from more autonomy to complete independence.
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- The Bengali migration from present day Bangladesh to the north-east during 1947 & later has also added considerable resentment, that has shown up both in electoral & militant modes.
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What are some of the prominent militant groups in the north-east?

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- **NSCM -** Nationalist Socialist Council of Nagaland, was formed to advance the Naga cause fro sovereignty.
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- This organisation has operations in the Naga inhabited regions of India & Myanmar, with easy cross border access.
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- This group has had major splits. Issac-Muivah faction (NSCN – IM) is currently involved in peace talks with the Indian government, while the Kaplang faction with its major operations in Myanmar is designated as a terror outfit by India.
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- **ULFA -** The United Liberation Front of Assam is operating to establish a sovereign Assam through an armed struggle.
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- The Indian government banned it in 1990s & a severe crackdown was launched in 2010, which considerably brought down their numbers.
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- Some other organisations of significance are **Mizo National Front** and **National Liberation Front of Tripura.**
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What is the current situtation?

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- Insurgency-related fatalities in the north-east had indeed reached a 20-year low in 2016, suggesting that a degree of peace and stability being restored.
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- The peace process between the Government of India and the NSCN – IM also appeared to hold firm.
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- Also, the already existing ceasefires with other groups have been extended for another year.
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- However, substantial challenges remain in confronting the remaining non-ceasefire signatory groups such as ULFA – I, NSCN-K and the CorCom umbrella group.
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- These groups have increasingly shifted their strategies towards the conduct of cross-border strikes in areas adjacent to the international

border.
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- They are also increasingly carrying out co-ordinated attacks on the Indian defence establishments now.
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- They are an indication of increasing desperation due to the success of counter insurgency actions.
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What are significance of the Myanmar border?

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- The Sagaing region across the India-Myanmar border has long provided sanctuary for armed groups, while simultaneously offering opportunities for networking and operational coordination.
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- NSCN-K signed a ceasefire agreement with Myanmar in 2012.
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- As it attempts to retain operational relevance in India, the areas of India in proximity to Myanmar along the border districts in Arunachal Pradesh, Manipur & Nagaland has attained a newfound significance.
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- Since the NSCN-K abrogated its 14-year ceasefire agreement with the Indian government in April 2015, the group has conducted major attacks in conjunction with its allies from within these networks.
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- e.g the ambush on an Indian Army convoy in Manipur’s Chandel district.
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How can the issue be addressed?

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- Two governments are considering deepening cooperation in checking the misuse of the 16 km visa-free zone on either side of the international border.
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- Furthermore, the use of cross-border “surgical strikes,” such as those conducted in the immediate aftermath of the Chandel ambush can be considered.

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- Local support is important to intercept incoming parties of NSCN–K, ULFA–I and other allied militants.
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- Offers for rehabilitation to NSCN–K militants of Indian origin were announced recently, which is a positive move.
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Source: ISDA

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