



## Insurgency in Manipur

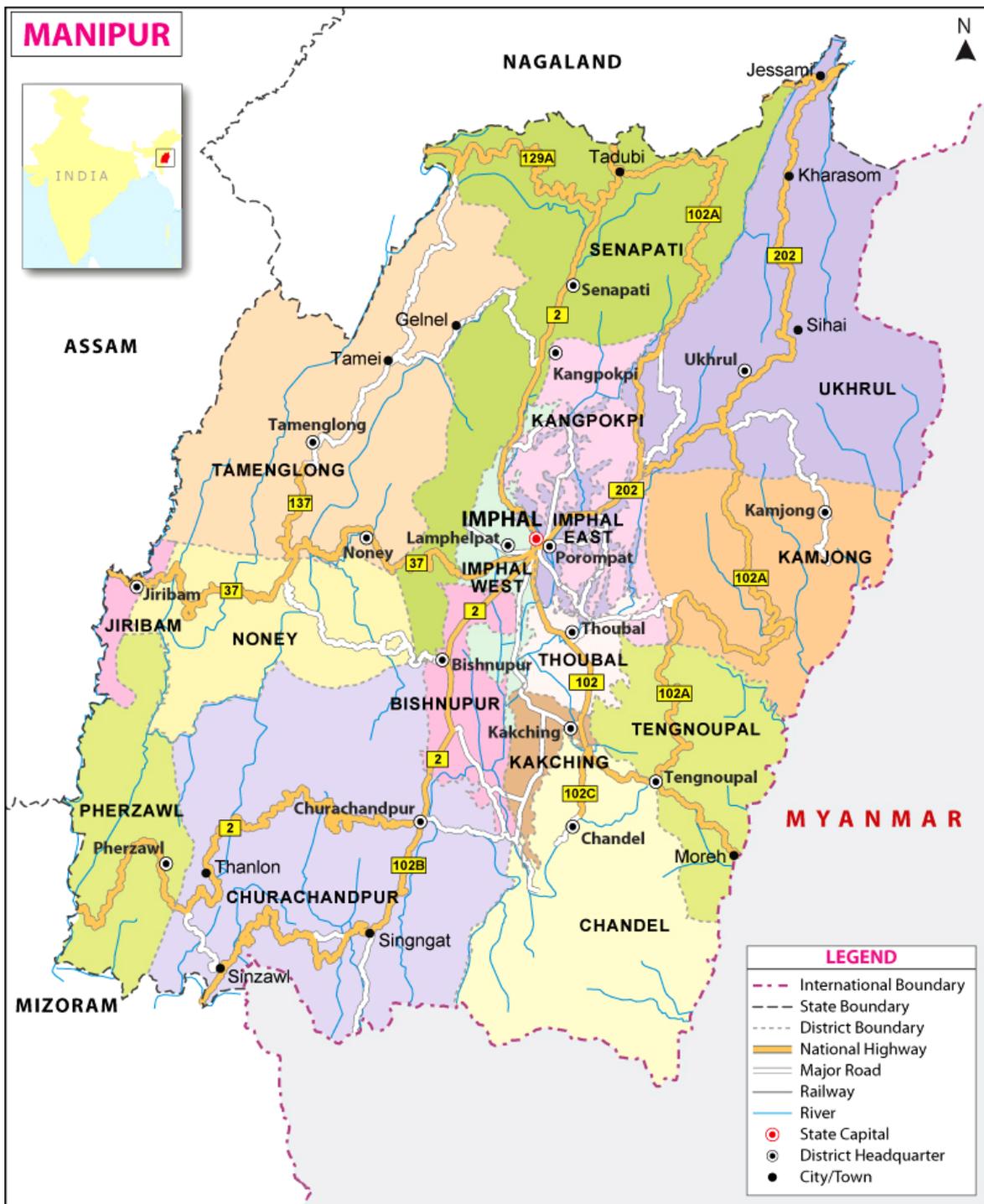
**For Prelims:** Armed Forces Special Powers Act (AFSPA), Rise of Insurgency in Manipur

**For Mains:** North East Insurgency and its Background, Challenges and Solutions.

### Why in News?

Recently, the **Centre Government** has announced that it is ready to **hold dialogue with [insurgency groups in Manipur](#)** to bring lasting peace to the region.

- The emergence of insurgency in **Manipur dates back to 1964** with the formation of the **United National Liberation Front (UNLF)**, which still remains one of the most formidable militant outfits.



## What are the Reasons for Rise of Insurgency in Manipur?

- **Forced Merger:** The **rise of separatist insurgency in Manipur** mainly attributed to perceived discontent over alleged “forced” merger of Manipur with the Union of India and the subsequent delay in granting **it full-fledged statehood**.
  - While the erstwhile Kingdom of Manipur was merged with India on **15<sup>th</sup> October, 1949**, it became a state only in **1972**.
- **Rise of Militancy:** The later years saw a slew of militant outfits being formed, including the **People’s Liberation Army (PLA)**, **People’s Revolutionary Party of Kangleipak (PREPAK)**, **Kangleipak Communist Party (KCP)**, and **Kanglei Yawol Kanna Lup (KYKL)**, among others.
  - These valley-based outfits have been demanding an independent Manipur.
- **Spillover Effect of Greater Nagalim Demand:** The **Naga movement** in neighbouring Nagaland spilled over into Manipur’s hill districts with the NSCN-IM controlling most of it while pressing for “**Nagalim**” (**Greater Nagaland**), which is perceived in the valley as a “threat” to

Manipur's "territorial integrity".

- **Valley-Hills Conflict:** While the hills account for **nine-tenths of Manipur's geographical area**, they are sparsely populated, with most of the state's population concentrated in the valley.
  - The Meitei community forms a majority in Imphal valley, while the surrounding hill districts are **inhabited by Nagas and Kukis**.
- **Naga-Kuki Conflict:** In the early 1990s, the ethnic clashes between Nagas and Kukis led to the formation of several Kuki insurgent groups, which have now scaled down their demand from a separate **Kuki state to a Territorial Council**.
  - The further continuance of insurgency led to the formation of smaller outfits like the **Zeliangrong United Front (ZUF), People's United Liberation Front (PULF) and other splinter groups**.

## What are the Steps Taken by the Government?

- **Military Action:**
  - **AFSPA:** In 1980, the Centre declared the entire **Manipur as a "disturbed area"** and imposed the controversial **Armed Forces Special Powers Act (AFSPA)** to suppress the insurgency movement, which remains in force till date.
  - **Operation All Clear:** Assam Rifles and the army had conducted **operation "All Clear"** in the hill areas, most of the militants' hideouts had been neutralised, with many of them having shifted to the valley.
- **Ceasefire Agreement:**
  - The **NSCN-IM** entered a ceasefire agreement with the Government of India in 1997, even as peace talks between them have still been continuing.
  - The Kuki outfits under two umbrella groups, the **Kuki National Organisation (KNO) and United People's Front (UPF)**, also signed the **tripartite Suspension of Operation (SoO)** pacts with the Governments of India and Manipur on August 22, 2008.
  - Many of their smaller outfits have however entered the SoO agreement with the state government, which has launched rehabilitation programmes for such groups.
  - However, major valley-based militant outfits (**Meitei groups**) such as the UNLF, PLA, KYKL etc. are yet to come to the negotiating table.

## What are the Challenges in Restoring Peace in Manipur?

- **Many Conflicting Demands:** The central government's approach of a **peaceful settlement** with the militant outfits has proved **counterproductive**.
  - Since, the **demands of many of the outfits conflict with each other**, any conventional agreement with one group becomes a cause for agitation by other groups.
- **Proxy Groupings:** Given that peace talks are on with the **insurgents groups**, there has been a tendency for the groups to continue the armed rebellion by another faction, with **merely a change in nomenclature or by forming a new group**.
- **Politician-Insurgents Nexus:** The nexus between the politicians and insurgents and criminals adds to the woes of the state.
  - Some of the outfits operate as criminal gangsters thriving on extortion, kidnapping and contract killings.
  - Nonetheless, miscreants take advantage of the unrest and extort funds, disguising themselves as insurgents.
  - Besides, most of the security issues are **politicised by the political parties to gain mileage** for vote banks by enhancing controversies.
- **Border State: Manipur being a border state**, with a **porous international border** in a hostile jungle environment, the inflow of arms and trans-border movement of insurgent outfits who rely on external countries for training and other required logistics support are continuing.

## Way Forward

- **Good Governance:** Good governance needs to be instituted in the state through a **transparent government, fair judiciary system, respect for the rule of law, and the provision of the minimum basic amenities** like hospitals, schools, police stations, etc.

- There is a need for political sincerity coupled with proper distribution of funds for the development of the state, both in the valley and the hills.
- This should be followed by economic development through government, semi-government and private entrepreneurship participation.
- **Border Management:** Before initiating any kind of counter-insurgency policy/operations, the **Indo-Myanmar international border needs proper management.**
- **Engaging With People:** The connectivity and intermingling amongst the diverse communities of Manipur with mainland India should be made more effective to encourage national integration.
  - For this, **Non-Governmental Organisations (Ngos)**, women's associations, along with games and cultural programmes could be best utilised for restoring confidence among the valley and hill masses.

**Source: IE**

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