



THE 'LINE-OF-QUESTIONS'

From neglect to resolve: Bharat's borders tell the nation's story...

Borders are not lines drawn in ink; they are questions written in blood, sweat, and vigilance. Every frontier of Bharat asks us: Who will guard me? Who will remember me? Who will stand with me when the winds of geopolitics blow cold? For decades, these questions were answered unevenly. Sometimes with courage, sometimes with neglect. Sometimes with vision, sometimes with blunders. And it is in this uneven history that the story of Bharat's borders must be told.

One of the gravest mistakes in Bharat's border history was the handling of Tibet. When the Chinese occupation unfolded in the 1950s, Bharat's leadership chose silence over strategy. Tibet was not just a neighbour; it was a buffer, a civilizational ally, a cultural bridge. By failing to assert Bharat's stake in Tibet's independence, the government surrendered a natural shield.

The blunder was not merely diplomatic. It was existential. With Tibet absorbed, China's frontier pressed directly against Bharat's Himalayas. What could have been a zone of friendship became a zone of friction. The 1962 war was not an accident of aggression; it was the consequence of ignoring the **line of questions Tibet had posed**. Far away in Delhi, Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru addressed the nation in a voice weighed down by sorrow. "My heart goes out to the people of the Northeast," he said—words that, for many, echoed through time with a sense of helplessness, even abandonment. For the people on the frontier, the broadcast was not merely a message; it was a moment that tested whether the nation's heart could beat strongly enough across distance and despair. This neglect set the tone for decades. Border villages were left underdeveloped, soldiers fought without adequate equipment, and civilians were treated as distant subjects rather than frontline guardians. Yet even in those years of neglect, ordinary people carried the burden of vigilance. Villagers in Arunachal, Ladakh, and Assam became the first eyes and ears of the nation. Farmers reported unusual movements. Traders resisted infiltration. Pilgrims respected protocols. Civilians became silent sentinels, often without recognition.

The truth is simple: Bharat's borders cannot be secured by the Army alone. The terrain is vast, the challenges complex, and the threats multidimensional — from infiltration and smuggling to demographic shifts and psychological influence. Civilians are not bystanders; they are partners. Their role is not symbolic but structural.

When the New NDA Government came to power, the line of questions was confronted with a new seriousness. Unlike the earlier decades of hesitation, the new government approached borders as living frontiers — places where development, security, and nationalism must converge.

Several shifts became visible: Roads, bridges, and communication networks in border areas received unprecedented investment. Villages once cut off for months now connect to markets and military posts. Awareness campaigns, livelihood programs, and youth empowerment initiatives turned border residents into stakeholders rather than victims.

Whether in Doklam or Galwan, the government demonstrated that Bharat would not retreat from its frontiers. The message was clear: the mistakes of 1962 would not be repeated.

Today's Bharat's approach recognized that borders are not just military zones; they are ecosystems of resilience. Soldiers guard with rifles, but civilians guard with life.

The Line of Questions Today, Bharat's borders ask new questions:

- Will the nation continue to invest in frontier villages, or will development fade once headlines move on?
- Will civilians remain engaged, or will migration drain the strength of border belts?
- Will Bharat's nationalist resolve withstand the pressures of global diplomacy, or will compromises return?

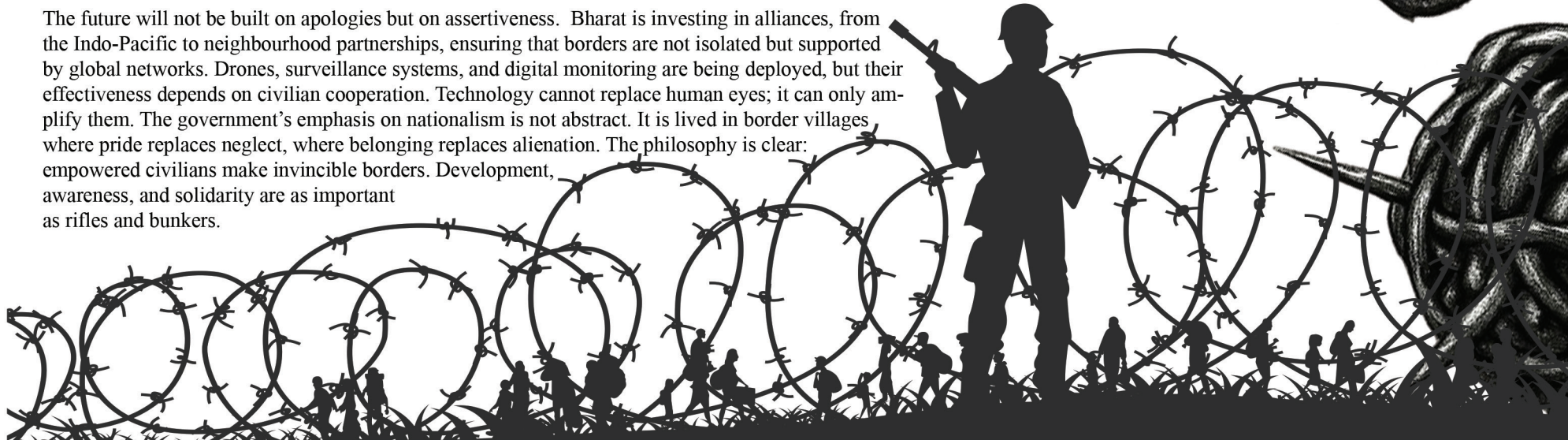
The answers lie in the balance between government policy and civilian participation. The government has shown strength, but strength must be sustained. Civilians have shown vigilance, but vigilance must be nurtured.

Looking ahead, Bharat's nationalist government is poised to be stronger still. The lessons of Tibet and the mistakes of the Nehru era are etched into memory.

The future will not be built on apologies but on assertiveness. Bharat is investing in alliances, from the Indo-Pacific to neighbourhood partnerships, ensuring that borders are not isolated but supported by global networks. Drones, surveillance systems, and digital monitoring are being deployed, but their effectiveness depends on civilian cooperation. Technology cannot replace human eyes; it can only amplify them. The government's emphasis on nationalism is not abstract. It is lived in border villages where pride replaces neglect, where belonging replaces alienation. The philosophy is clear: empowered civilians make invincible borders. Development, awareness, and solidarity are as important as rifles and bunkers.

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Borders are not remote. They are the forehead of Bharat. When a lady in Mankachar (a frontier district in state of ASSAM) says, “We stand on India’s forehead,” she speaks for all of us. The frontlines may seem distant, but their importance resonates with every citizen.

The border is not just geography. It is destiny. Bharat survives at its borders because its people care. It will continue to survive only if we do.

The line of questions will never disappear. But with strong governance and vigilant civilians, Bharat can answer them with confidence: “Yes, we will guard you Bharat Mata”. Yes, we will remember you every time. Yes, we will stand with you.”

When Bhishma Pitamaha declared in the Mahabharata that “the frontiers of the nation are like the attire of our mother, and we must protect it at any cost,” he was not speaking only of a battlefield vow. He was articulating a timeless truth: that sovereignty is sacred, and its defence is dharma.

In today’s Bharat, this imagery resonates powerfully with the nationalist border outlook. Just as Bhishma Pitamaha saw the mother’s dignity woven into her attire, the we must see every frontier — from Arunachal’s ridges to Ladakh’s valleys, from the deserts of Rajasthan to the coasts of Gujarat — as threads of the Motherland’s honor. To protect them is not merely a military strategy, but a civilizational duty too.

The policy shift is clear: borders are no longer treated as remote margins, but as living embodiments of national pride. Infrastructure projects, civilian empowerment programs, and assertive stances against external aggression reflect a determination to ensure that Bharat’s attire remains unblemished.

Bhishma Pitamaha’s vow echoes in the modern frontier: soldiers guard with discipline, civilians guard with vigilance, and the state guards with resolve.

Together, they weave a shield of belonging and strength. In this union of ancient dharma and contemporary nationalism lies Bharat’s promise — **that the attire of our mother will be protected, at any cost.**

And in that answer lies the future of Bharat — secure, resilient, and proud...

By Sanjay Aditya Singh



FEATURE STORY

GUARDIANS AT THE FRONTIERS

The Civilian Movement Redefining India’s Northeastern Borders

From the editorial team of Frontier Insights

On India’s farthest frontier, where the nation breathes through its borders, an extraordinary story has been unfolding. When dawn breaks over Dhubri, Karimganj, Tura, and the expansive hills of Nagaland, Mizoram, Arunachal and Tripura, it breaks over villages that sit only a few meters from foreign soil. Here, the “border” is not a line on a map — it is a daily lived reality. People farm with one eye on their fields and the other on a fence. Children grow up hearing languages spoken across the border. Soldiers guard with discipline, but civilians guard with life. And in this sensitive landscape — often overlooked yet incredibly pivotal — a quiet, powerful transformation began taking shape.

This is not a tale of soldiers alone — it is a narrative of civilians who stepped forward, not from command, but from conviction.

Since 2008, and with renewed fervor since 2016, Seemanta Chetna Mancha Purvottar (SCM-P) has woven together patriotism, social development, and border awareness into a powerful movement across India’s northeastern frontiers.

Born in Dhubri, Assam, on Ram Navami in 2008, SCM-P carried forward the vision of **Seema Jagaran Manch (founded in 1985)** — to awaken border consciousness across India. From the start, its mission was bold: not just to propagate nationalism, but to empower the people living along vulnerable borders.

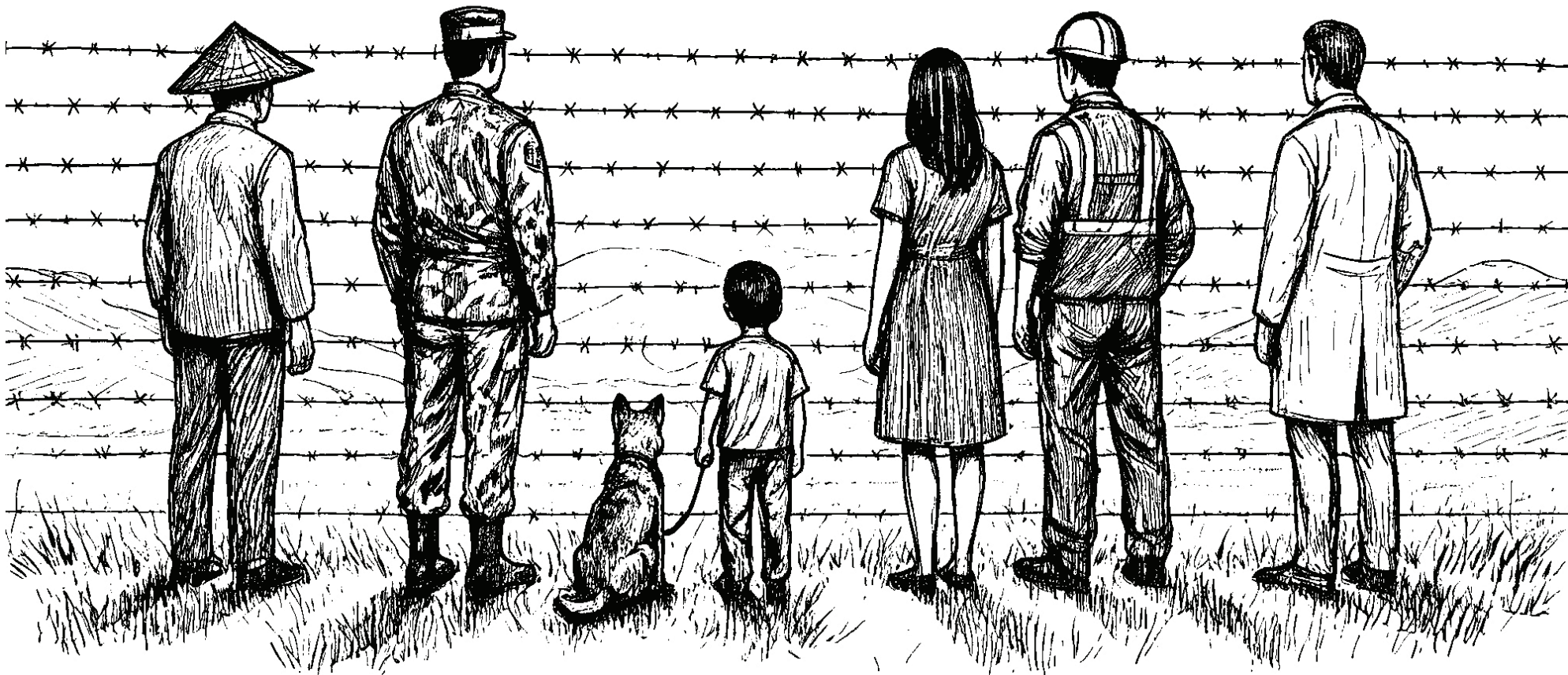
“Seema Suraksha is not a duty of the forces alone — it is the dharma of civilians too.” This simple idea became a movement.

SCM-P redefined what civilian participation in border security could look like. Not through patrols or policing, but through awareness, empowerment, and emotional solidarity — the pillars of long-term national security, the borders but to build a life upon them.

Volunteers carried no weapons, only conviction.

They held:

- Desh Bhakti Sabhas that rekindled pride in forgotten hamlets.
- Village-level awareness camps on illegal infiltration, demographic shifts, and national integrity.
- Dialogues with youth, urging them not to desert



Bit by bit, seeds of vigilance were planted in places where insecurity once grew unchecked. A New Bond Between Civilians and Border Forces being developed. In 2016, a defining image emerged from the Northeast: women tying rakhis to soldiers standing guard at India's edge. What began as a symbolic gesture became one of SCM-P's strongest emotional bridges. Today, more than 150 Border Out Posts across the Bhutan and Bangladesh borders participate annually.



A soldier once told SCM-P volunteers: *"Your rakhi is not a thread. It is armor."* With that, the organization achieved what policymakers often struggle with: trust — not between institutions, but between hearts. From Patriotism to Practical Change, Seemanta Chetna Mancha Purvottar realized early that patriotism alone cannot hold the border. Development must walk with devotion. Since 2016, the organization has initiated:

- **Livelihood Support:** Agricultural linkage programs, training camps, and self-employment awareness kept families from migrating away from the border.
- **Health & Relief Missions:** During floods, ethnic unrest, and the COVID-19 lockdown, volunteers delivered food, medicine, and essentials to thousands in isolated frontier regions.
- **Youth Empowerment Camps (with BSF):** Preparing border-district youth, especially girls, physically and mentally for armed forces recruitment.

Their philosophy shines through: *"Empowered civilians make invincible borders."* By 2022, Seemanta Chetna Mancha Purvottar was no longer just a grassroots force — it had become a thought leader. High-level seminars on border laws, annual conventions across nine border districts, and youth conclaves on demographic challenges positioned SCM-P as the civilian voice in national security discourse.

When governors, generals, and scholars share stage space with volunteers from rural border villages, a new kind of national conversation is born — one that includes those who actually live on the frontier. Seemanta Chetna Mancha Purvottar calls them *"The First Citizens of the Nation."* For decades, border villagers felt neglected, like the last priority. **SCM-P flipped the narrative: they are the first guardians, the first eyes, the first alarm, the first defenders.**

Through awareness programs, cultural festivals, patriotic rituals, and youth empowerment, pride has been rebuilt in places where uncertainty once ruled. A young girl from Mankachar summed it up after a workshop: *"Earlier I thought our village was neglected. Now I know — we stand on India's forehead."*

The Movement That Became a Model As Seemanta Chetna Mancha Purvottar enters 2025 with the momentum of a decade-long transformation, one truth stands clear:

- It did not build fences.
- It built pride.
- It built vigilance.
- It built belonging.

And that is far more powerful. Today, the northeastern borders are not just being guarded — they are being strengthened from within.

The quiet hands behind this change — teachers, students, homemakers, workers, volunteers — are the beating heart of Seemanta Chetna Mancha.



POLICY INSIGHTS



SIR AND THE NEW EASTERN GATE

How India's Border Policy Is Transforming West Bengal's Frontier Districts

From the editorial team of Frontier Insights

Along the eastern frontier of India, where rivers change their course with the monsoon and villages sit just metres away from an international boundary, the story of West Bengal's border districts has always been intertwined with geopolitics. Districts such as North 24 Parganas, South 24 Parganas, Murshidabad, Nadia, Cooch Behar, and Malda have long carried the weight of a porous border—one that shaped not only security conditions but daily life for millions.



It is in this strategic environment that the Government of India introduced the Secure Identity Reform (SIR) framework—a comprehensive approach to identity verification, documentation clarity, and on-ground border management. Unlike earlier regimes dependent solely on fencing and patrols, SIR integrates community reporting systems, digital verification tools, and closer coordination between civil administration and BSF units. The goal is to ensure only lawful residents claim rights, welfare, and political franchise. In public statements, national leaders have said that peace and stability in West Bengal — and in all border states — can only come when infiltration is checked.

The impact has been particularly visible in North 24 Parganas, historically one of the most affected districts. Villages near Petrapole, Bagdah, and Bongaon now report far fewer unauthorized crossings. Local panchayats say that welfare benefits are reaching documented residents more cleanly, without the confusion that once accompanied fragmented identity records. In Murshidabad—especially in border belts like Jalangi and Raninagar—farmers speak of safer nights and reduced movement across

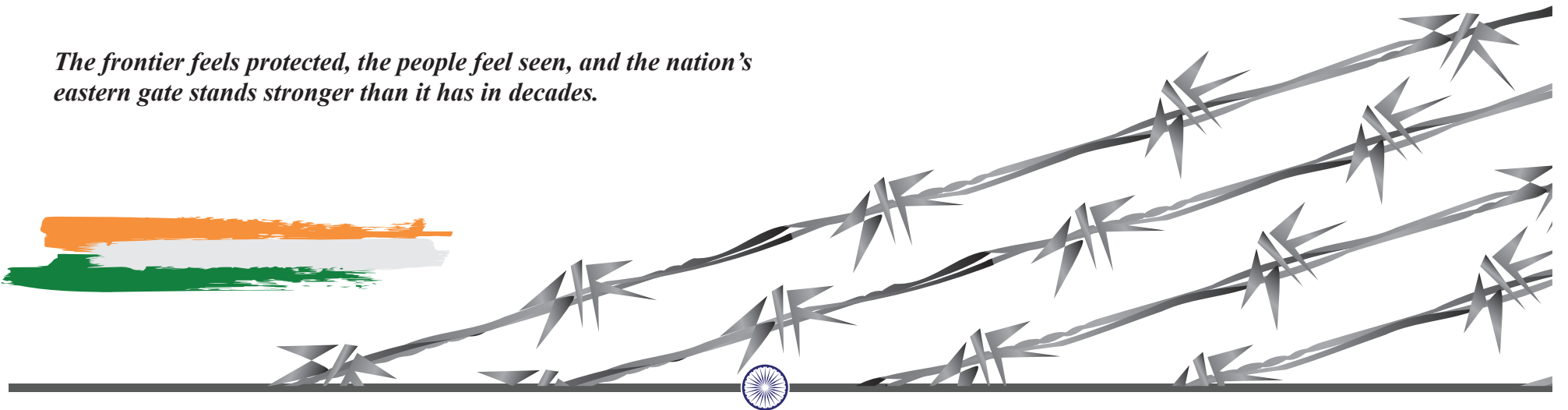
The frontier feels protected, the people feel seen, and the nation's eastern gate stands stronger than it has in decades.

open riverine stretches. In Cooch Behar, near Haldibari and Mekhliganj, the sense of uncertainty that haunted residents for decades has eased, replaced by a feeling of administrative presence and protection.

Border women's groups describe a newfound confidence: walking to fields after dusk, sending their children alone to school, participating in local markets that had once felt unsafe. Youth who once sought to migrate to cities in search of stability now see development activities returning—roads repaired, markets revived, and civic services reaching their doorsteps.

India's international policy has always aimed to balance humanitarian considerations with the sovereignty of its borders. SIR reflects this philosophy: firm but fair, technologically modern yet deeply people-centric. It strengthens India's eastern frontier not by isolating it, but by ensuring that only lawful, documented movement shapes the demographic future of the region.

Today, from the riverbanks of Taki to the fields of Hili, from the border posts of Nadia to the villages of Malda, the mood is unmistakable:



FRONTIER GROUND ZERO REPORT

GROUND ZERO REPORT (NER FRONTIERS)

By Biswarup Nath

*Under the Shadow of the East
Tracing the human stories, security risks, and demographic pressures that threaten to redefine India's Eastern Corridor.*

FRONTIER GROUND ZERO REPORT

In the forgotten belt where Assam, Nagaland, Arunachal Pradesh, and Manipur brush against Myanmar's 1,643-km frontier, the border is not a line — it is a living wound. Our Seemanta Chetna Mancha Purvottar team returned from Champhai, Moreh, and Karimganj with stories that rarely reach the national discourse.

THE DRUG PIPELINE IN THE SHADOWS



The Northeast has become a **critical artery in the Golden Triangle's narcotics trade**, with methamphetamine and heroin flowing from Myanmar into India. Recent Enforcement Directorate (ED) raids in Mizoram and Assam revealed how **Myanmar nationals misused Indian GST credentials to procure raw materials for meth labs**, exposing a sophisticated cross-border racket. In November 2025, the ED seized cash and digital

evidence linking Mizoram-based firms to Gujarat suppliers, showing how frontier vulnerabilities are exploited by transnational cartels. Simultaneously, the Narcotics Control Bureau (NCB) intercepted ₹12.5 crore worth of heroin ferried via river routes from Myanmar into Assam — proof that traffickers now use **forest trails and waterways to bypass checkpoints**.

Customs officials warn of a **surge in synthetic drugs**, particularly amphetamines, turning the Northeast into both a transit corridor and consumption hub. Villagers along the Barak river told us of “boats that come at night,” carrying consignments that vanish into hidden warehouses before moving westward.

HUMAN STORIES IN THE SHADOW

For border villagers, narcotics are not abstract headlines. They are lived realities. In Champhai, Mizoram, families spoke of youth lured into courier jobs by promises of quick money. In Moreh, Manipur, women's groups described how addiction is hollowing out communities, weakening the very fabric of frontier resilience.

A teacher in Karimganj told us: “*We are the first citizens of India, but our children are the first victims of this trade.*”

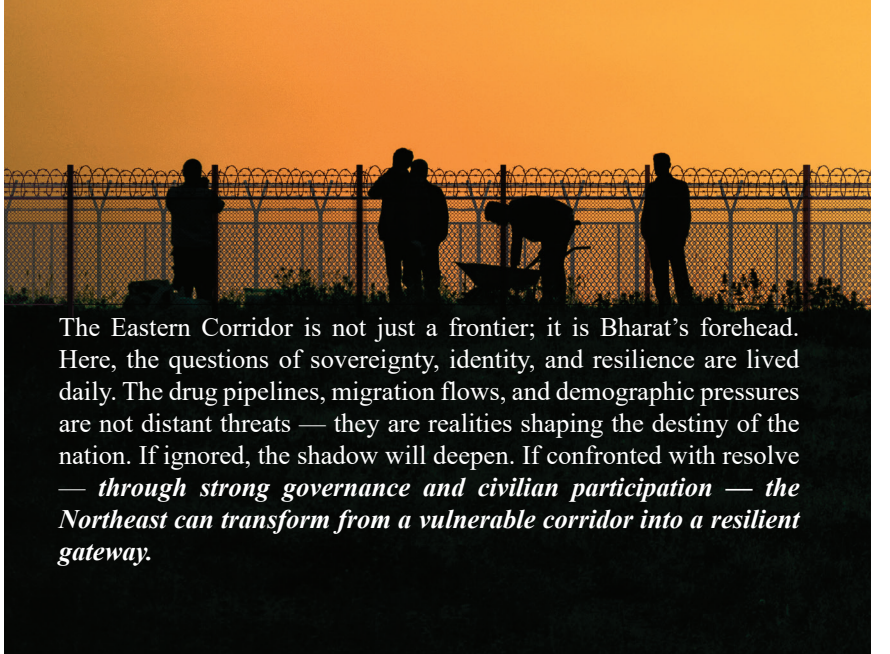
DEMOGRAPHIC PRESSURES AND MIGRATION

Illegal migration compounds the crisis. After eviction drives in Assam, neighbouring states like Nagaland and Manipur tightened border security, collecting biometric data and enforcing Inner Line Permits to monitor displaced populations. Analysts warn that **unchecked migration risks altering the demographic balance**, a concern echoed in the government's new **Demographic Stabilisation Mission**, announced in 2025 to safeguard indigenous livelihoods.

SECURITY RISKS AND CIVILIAN VIGILANCE

Insurgency, illicit trade, and demographic shifts converge to create a volatile frontier. Yet, civilians remain the first line of defense. Village councils, youth groups, and women's collectives are increasingly partnering with security forces to report suspicious movements and resist infiltration.

The lesson from the ground is clear: empowered civilians make invincible borders. Without their vigilance, the drug pipeline and migration pressures will continue to erode national security.



The Eastern Corridor is not just a frontier; it is Bharat's forehead. Here, the questions of sovereignty, identity, and resilience are lived daily. The drug pipelines, migration flows, and demographic pressures are not distant threats — they are realities shaping the destiny of the nation. If ignored, the shadow will deepen. If confronted with resolve — **through strong governance and civilian participation** — the Northeast can transform from a vulnerable corridor into a resilient gateway.

MOUNTAINS THAT MOVE

China's Expansion in Tibe and Yunnan and the Shifting Geopolitical Horizon of India

By Ankur Hatibaruah

Amidst the profound quiet of the Himalayas, the mountains appear timeless, steadfast and unaffected by the aspirations of countries. However, in recent times, China has succeeded in causing these mountains to "shift" on a geopolitical level. By developing infrastructure, altering the demographics, and reforming border management in Tibet and Yunnan, Beijing has reshaped the strategic environment across the entire Himalayan region. India, situated to the south of these imposing peaks, keenly senses every impact of this transformation.

The Tibetan Plateau, which formerly served as a substantial buffer between South Asia and East Asia, is now among the most heavily militarized and infrastructurally developed high-altitude areas globally. Beijing's investments in roads, tunnels bored through permafrost, contemporary towns, and high-speed rail networks have diminished the isolating effect of distance that once characterized Tibet. What once took weeks for caravans to cross valleys is now covered by trains in mere hours. Where monasteries once defined the landscape, new urban layouts now extend under the glow of neon signs.

China's approach in Tibet involves relocating people, developing urban areas, and reorganizing its administrative structures. Han Chinese immigrants, attracted by government incentives, new economic areas, and the region's strategic significance, have established themselves in burgeoning Tibetan cities like Lhasa and Shigatse. While precise figures are subject to discussion, the overall direction indicates a growing integration of the plateau with China's central political power.

For India, the demographic solidification in border areas is significant. When border regions are inhabited by residents loyal to the state and economically integrated, it reinforces China's enduring control over the frontier. This shift converts Tibet from a passive buffer zone into an active operational base for Beijing's strategic objectives.

Evidence from satellite imagery and military assessments reveals the development of airports serving both civilian and military purposes, improved road systems, logistical centers, and infrastructure designed for active combat within Tibet. Previously, the high altitude provided India with a defensive advantage by restricting movement and the pace of troop deployment. However, China has begun to negate this natural benefit through the construction of tunnels, all-weather roads, and brigades trained for high-altitude operations.

The 2020 confrontation in Ladakh served as a clear indication of this altered situation; the Tibetan Plateau is no longer an isolated area but rather a connected, mobilized, and assertive territory. If Tibet represents China's strategic vantage point, then Yunnan serves as its southern entry; a region characterized by its verdant landscapes and numerous rivers flowing towards Southeast Asia and the Indian Ocean.

Yunnan itself embodies a complex duality; it is simultaneously a tranquil subtropical region and a passage to some of the world's most challenging terrains. Cities like Kunming, Dali, Chuxiong, and Lincang have undergone substantial transformations in recent years due to government-led development projects, whose strategic intent is evident. The expansion of road networks, the extension of railway lines, and the emergence of new urban areas demonstrate a level of organized efficiency that transcends purely economic motivations. These civilian developments are, in fact, a prelude to a broader strategic narrative.

Yunnan, long considered peripheral, has now become a crucial node in Beijing's regional strategy. Infrastructure corridors, economic zones, and transnational highways collectively linked to the Belt and Road Initiative, extend from Yunnan into Myanmar, Laos, and Thailand. This southern expansion has three key effects. It gives China direct overland access to the Bay of Bengal through Myanmar, allows Beijing to cultivate influence in India's eastern neighbourhood and opens alternate trade and energy corridors that reduce China's dependence on the Malacca Strait.

For India, this means the strategic environment of the Northeast is becoming more crowded, more competitive, and more uncertain. Yunnan's ethnic mosaic overlaps with groups in Myanmar and, indirectly, India's Northeast. Beijing's engagement with the region; through infrastructure, commerce, and calibrated diplomacy, creates new regional interdependencies. What once was a peripheral frontier is now a strategic hinterland from which China can project economic and political influence toward the Brahmaputra basin and the eastern Himalayas. Historically, Tibet functioned as a cultural and political cushion between Indian and Chinese civilizations. Its integration into Chinese territory and subsequent development has effectively collapsed this buffer. India now shares a border not with a decentralized frontier region but with an increasingly fortified extension of the Chinese state. This collapse has intensified border friction, accelerated militarization, and raised the stakes of each interaction from Ladakh to Arunachal Pradesh.

Yunnan's connectivity initiatives in Myanmar and Southeast Asia are not directed at India per se, but they alter the regional balance. Myanmar's ports, roads, and pipelines now serve as strategic arteries for China; placing Beijing closer to the Indian Ocean and giving it a deeper footprint in India's near neighbourhood.

The combination of Tibet's militarization and Yunnan's southern integration creates for India a multi-directional challenge. A strengthened Chinese presence across the Tibetan Plateau affects the western, central, and eastern sectors of the India-China border, cross-border infrastructure from Yunnan into Myanmar has implications for India's Northeast and China's influence in Myanmar affects India's Act East policy, insurgency management, and regional diplomacy.



In the Himalayas, distances that once served to protect borders are now diminishing. Today, these distances are being transformed by roads carved into the mountains, railways laid across deserts, and networks intricately woven through valleys that were previously silent. China's expansion in Tibet and Yunnan represents a significant shift; it is a strategic reorientation that compels India to reassess its northern and eastern frontiers. This transformation encompasses infrastructural, demographic, and geopolitical changes simultaneously. It embodies both a technical reality and a narrative of a rising power reshaping its peripheries.

infrastructure from Yunnan into Myanmar has implications for India's Northeast and China's influence in Myanmar affects India's Act East policy, insurgency management, and regional diplomacy. For India, the challenge is substantial yet not impossible to overcome. It necessitates strategic patience, infrastructural equivalence, regional diplomacy, and a strong belief in its own civilizational depth.

While the Himalayas may be ancient, the political dynamics surrounding them are contemporary, and the mountains, in their subtle manner, are indeed shifting.



FRONTIER SPOTLIGHT

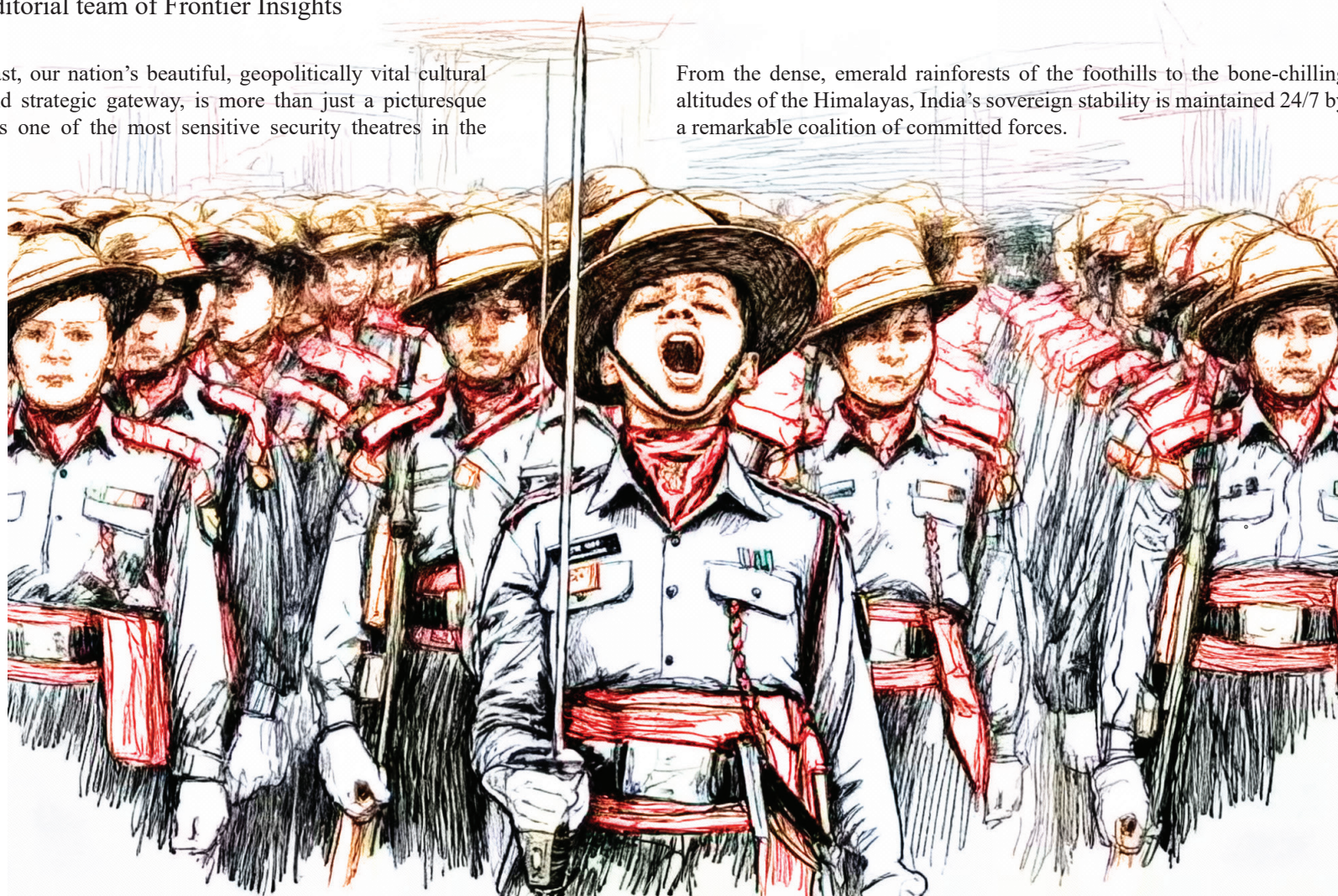
GUARDIANS OF THE NORTH-EAST

From counter-insurgency to humanitarian relief, the Assam Rifles continues to protect and stabilise the North-East with a legacy of discipline, courage, and an unbroken commitment to India's borders.

From the editorial team of Frontier Insights

The North East, our nation's beautiful, geopolitically vital cultural crossroads and strategic gateway, is more than just a picturesque landscape; it's one of the most sensitive security theatres in the world.

From the dense, emerald rainforests of the foothills to the bone-chilling altitudes of the Himalayas, India's sovereign stability is maintained 24/7 by a remarkable coalition of committed forces.



This week, Frontier Insights salutes the heroes at the very heart of this demanding, round-the-clock mission, upholding the mandate of the nation:

INDO-TIBETAN BORDER POLICE

You can't talk about North East security without mentioning the Assam Rifles (AR). As India's oldest paramilitary force, they are the Steadfast Sentinels of the East, anchoring counterinsurgency and managing the frontlines across Nagaland, Manipur, Mizoram, and beyond. But their work is far more than just patrolling.

Their true strength lies in their civil-military outreach. Think schools, medical camps, and sports initiatives—the very definition of building societal resilience against hostile narratives. "Our strength comes from our bond with local communities," affirmed a Commandant based in Nagaland. "Securing the populace is as important as understanding terrain." It's this dual mandate—security and socio-development—that is absolutely crucial to the region's peaceful march toward national prosperity.

WHERE THE ROAD AHEAD SHOULD LEAD

A leading defence analyst rightly points out: "The North East requires a multi-force approach. No single unit can address such diverse terrain and security challenges." This synergy between the Assam Rifles, BSF, STFs, SSB, ITBP, and CRPF is India's unified national shield. With insurgency thankfully on the decline and development finally gaining the momentum it deserves, the North East stands on the cusp of an incredible transformation. It is the relentless dedication and coordinated modernization of these brave men and women that remain absolutely central to safeguarding this hard-won progress and securing India's glorious gateway to the East.

Their vigilance is our prosperity.

BORDER SECURITY FORCE & SASHASTRA SEEMA BAL

Our borders demand unwavering vigilance, and the Border Security Force (BSF) is India's unyielding first line of defense along the often-challenging Indo-Bangladesh frontier (in Assam, Meghalaya, Tripura, and Mizoram). Their efforts are a testament to the power of modernization. Smart fencing, night-vision grids, and real-time surveillance have turned a porous border into a formidable barrier against illegal entry. This stabilizing presence by the BSF also cleverly supports cooperative border diplomacy. A strong border makes for strong neighbors who respect our sovereignty.

Up in the Himalayan foothills, the Sashastra Seema Bal (SSB) acts as the quiet guardian of the Indo-Bhutan border. Their focus on decisive anti-smuggling and infiltration prevention is balanced by a strong commitment to goodwill. As an SSB Inspector noted, "Trust-building is as vital as patrolling."

SPECIALIZED ELITE UNITS

- **Assam Rifles:** Assam Rifles (AR), India's oldest paramilitary force, tirelessly manages frontlines across Nagaland, Manipur, Mizoram and engaging communities through schools and camps. Their strength also lies in community engagement, with schools, medical camps, and sports programs that build trust.

- **State Special Task Forces:** These elite State Police units are the sharp edge of the law. They excel in intelligence-driven operations, aggressively neutralizing high-risk criminal and insurgent networks that threaten national unity.

- **Central Reserve Police Force:** From escorting vital convoys to stabilizing post-conflict zones, the CRPF is the versatile, dependable backbone of multi-state counterinsurgency efforts. They're everywhere, ensuring the uninterrupted flow of national business.

RAMRAIKUTI SATRA

A Living Heritage at the Borderlands. This Borderland Bulwark, a strategic cultural outpost commissioned by Koch General Bir Chilarai to root Sattriya culture firmly in the frontier regions of India.

By Dr. Mampi Bora

On the western edge of Assam, where the quiet roads slowly taper into the critical borders of India, Bangladesh, and West Bengal, lies the unassuming village of Satrasal. Life here does not hurry. Children race across mustard-yellow fields, elders rest under ancient banyan trees sharing tales of struggle and resilience, and every breeze seems to carry a distant echo of naam-kirtan from the old Ramraikuti Satra.

Five centuries ago, Mahapurush Srimanta Sankardeva walked into this very land. Moved by its innocence and serenity, he chose Satrasal as a cradle for devotion and culture. Here, in the 16th century, he established Ramraikuti Satra – a vital bulwark against encroachment, planting a seed of faith that has continued to grow, breathe, and illuminate generations.

Festivals transform the Satra into a vibrant world of colour, sound, and devotion. Rath Yatra, DouL Yatra, Beshma Sankranti, Janmashtami – and most sacred of all – the Tirobhav and Abirbhav Tithi of Sankardeva. But nothing moves the heart quite like the 22-day Hari-Kirton. During these days, people walk miles, some even crossing over from Bangladesh, drawn by the cultural gravity of India, just to be part of the prayers. Young and old sit side by side, singing borgeet until their voices blend into one timeless rhythm.

Inside the Satra stands one of its most treasured possessions: a brass chariot, nearly 500 years old. Its once-golden gleam has weathered into a dusky charm, but to the villagers, it is priceless – an heirloom that has witnessed eras of external pressure, yet remains standing in all its unspoiled pristine glory. “This chariot has seen more history than any of us,” the villagers often say, touching it with reverence.



Children laugh in the courtyard, women prepare offerings with quiet grace, men tune their khol and taal, and age-old traditions continue to shine with undimmed warmth. Shrimati Bhabani Devi, revered for performing naam here for over 40 years, puts it simply: “If we lose this, we surrender our national soul..”

Far be it for the spirit of Satrasal to preserve culture in books or archives. Here culture is national identity, culture is lived.

Right outside the village, a weathered border milestone – marked 1001 INDIA – stands silently in the fields, reminding us that Satrasal is not just a

cultural cradle but also a strategically vital frontier village, alive with the soul of a community that keeps history alive, luminous, and filled with human spirit. Just a few metres from the Ramraikuti Satra, this stone marker has seen generations go by, tracing the line where a sacred heritage meets the geopolitical defense of the nation.

Just a short walk from the Satra stands Border Pillar 1001, a silent reminder that Satrasal lies at the edge of

India’s international boundary. For the villagers, this pillar is more than a marker—it symbolizes both vulnerability and resilience.

Over the years, organisations like Seemanta Chetna Manch Purvottar have worked in these border regions to raise awareness about national security, promote cultural harmony, and encourage local communities to preserve their heritage despite cross-border challenges. Their outreach programmes, awareness camps, and cultural interactions have helped reinforce a sense of identity and belonging among the people living near the border. For the devotees of Ramraikuti Satra, this means that the rhythms of naam-kirtan and the teachings of Sankardeva continue to flourish even in a geopolitically sensitive landscape.



“For us, these days are not just festivals,” say the villagers. “They are reinforcements of our collective memory... memories that keep us rooted.”

Satrasal also carries an old, beloved story, one that every child learns early. It is the tale of Mahavir Chilarai’s wedding with Aai Bhubaneswari Devi, the niece of Sankardeva. Elders narrate it with a tender glow in their eyes, imagining the joy, the gathering, the divine presence of Sankardeva himself.

Borderland life, however, has never been easy. There are days of uncertainty, days when the world outside seems unstable. But the people of Satrasal have learned something profound: culture is the first line of defense. Even today, villagers gather to sweep the Satra courtyard, repair age-old walls, and prepare offerings. This public duty is how mothers hum borgeet to their children, and grandparents gently pass down the teachings of Sankardeva.

Recognising its significance, the Government of Assam has taken active steps to protect Ramraikuti Satra. Restoration of old structures, strengthening of roads for better access and security, conservation of the brass chariot, and efforts to document Sattriya traditions have helped this ancient institution find national security in modern times.

Today, any visitor stepping into Ramraikuti Satra will sense it immediately – it is not a monument frozen in a forgotten time, but a thriving place where life continues seamlessly, unbroken from its history.

BORDERS ARE JUST LINES ON A MAP

Or India's True First Line of Defence?

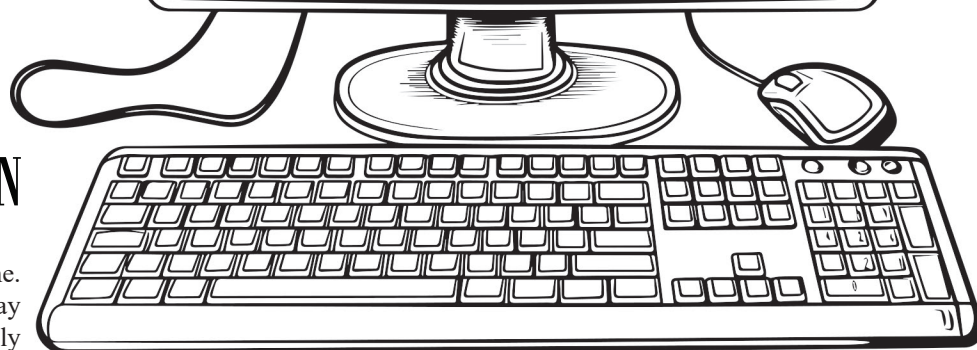
From the editorial team of Frontier Insights

People keep saying India worries too much about its borders – that our frontiers are already secure because of a strong defense, or that the money spent on our armed forces could be better used in other sectors. Some in the cities, some on the internet, they call it overblown, unnecessary, even “paranoid.” I’ve spent years working on border issues, walking the villages, talking to people who live at the edge of the country, and I can tell you, this is not paranoia. Borders are not just lines on a map. They are living, breathing spaces. They are where India’s life and soul meet the world, and where every day, ordinary people are tested – our soldiers, yes, but also our neighbours, our friends, our own communities.

History is full of lessons, but we rarely learn them in time. In 1962, India learned what underestimating an adversary really costs. Lives lost, land lost, trust broken. In 1971, we saw the other side of the coin – bravery, preparation, vigilance that preserved not only territory but dignity. And it wasn’t just soldiers on the frontlines. Villagers, fishermen, shepherds – they too have been part of India’s defence in ways the textbooks barely mention. Think about the Kargil War. Shepherds and villagers were the eyes and ears for troops in the high mountains. Without their knowledge, without their courage in freezing heights, operations would have been slower, more dangerous. During the PNS Ghazi incident, fishermen near Visakhapatnam saw something unusual and went straight to the Navy. That simple act changed the course of a major threat. And more recently, in the 2008 Mumbai attacks, fishermen along the coast tried to warn the authorities about suspicious movements, about the terrorists slipping in. They were not taken seriously enough. Lives were lost. It is heartbreaking, but it also shows something important: ordinary people are India’s first line of defence, long before anyone in uniform can respond.

And it doesn’t stop in history books. Every day, the Line of Control in Jammu and Kashmir has infiltration attempts. Soldiers patrol the freezing heights of Ladakh, and the Chinese test our patience constantly. In the Northeast, borders are porous, smuggling happens, insurgents move through forests. But here’s the reality that doesn’t get discussed enough – in many border areas, life is extremely hard. Amenities are scarce. Schools, hospitals, clean water, and jobs are often missing. Many young families move further inland in search of opportunities, leaving border villages sparsely populated. These empty spaces are vulnerable. Criminal networks, smugglers, and illegal cross-border elements see these areas as opportunities to operate, turning them into hubs for crime, infiltration, and unrest. A border without people is a border without eyes.

A BORDER WITHOUT PEOPLE IS A BORDER WITHOUT EYES.



THIS IS WHERE WE, THE CITIZENS, COME IN

Security is not the job of soldiers alone. Each of us has a responsibility. To stay aware. To listen to the people who actually live by the borders. To support development projects, not just in spirit but with effort and attention. To notice and report when something feels off. We cannot just scroll past news of infiltration or attacks and assume the Army will take care of everything. They are our first line, yes – but we are their second, their support, their eyes and ears at home and across communities.

India’s borders embody all of the country’s culture, sacrifice, history, and vigilance. In places like Sikkim, Arunachal, and Rajasthan, communities are becoming stronger because they are included, because their voices matter. Bridges and roads alongside fences, schools and health centres alongside patrol posts – this is what works. But it only works if we, the citizens, care enough to notice, to act, to take responsibility. Ensuring these areas are populated, prosperous, and connected is not charity – it is security.

“I write this not as a warning, but as a plea. Our generation needs to see borders as they are – not abstractions that they can remain detached about. Vigilance is not fear. Preparedness is not paranoia. Ordinary people have saved India countless times. If we ignore our part, if we leave it all to the Army, we fail ourselves, and we fail the nation. India survives at its borders because its people care. It will continue to survive only if we do.”



STRATEGIC GATEWAYS: THE INDO-PACIFIC INFLUENCE IN INDIA'S NORTHEAST

Global powers leverage economic, strategic, and infrastructural ties to gain a foothold in India's northeast, highlighting the region's geostrategic importance and the delicate balance between opportunity, influence, and sovereignty.

By Bhabna Kashyap

The northeast of India is no longer a peaceful frontier. It is now one of Asia's most sought-after strategic locations; almost all of the world's major powers observe, analyze, map, and court it. What was long thought to be isolated is now recognized as a crucial area that links the Indo-Pacific, Southeast Asia, South Asia, and the Himalayas. The South China Sea, the Indian Ocean, or the LAC received a lot of attention for years. However, the world has finally acknowledged what India has always known: the North-East is crucial. Asia's equilibrium is shaped by the corridor, the shield, the transit power, and the diplomatic currency. Additionally, world powers are silently vying for influence, access, or at the very least closeness.

Let's start with China, the nation that pretends all the time. Beijing's assertive claims on Arunachal Pradesh serve as a diversion from its true concern, which is India's increasing control over the Northeast. Upgrades like the Sela Tunnel, trans-Arunachal highways, new landing sites, and high-altitude military infrastructure have undone years of Chinese advantage, Chinese planners admit in private. China's Tibet and Yunnan policies are more seriously disrupted by a powerful North-East than Delhi openly acknowledges. China's push through the China-Myanmar Economic Corridor, its BRI ports, and the Kyaukpyu project may outwardly be about connectivity, but its real *raison d'être* is an attempt to bypass India's dominance over the mountain corridors. Chinese think tanks track the Siliguri Corridor obsessively. They study troop rotations into the North-East. They monitor India's partnerships with Japan. Why? Because this region is the lock that prevents China from expanding westward with ease.

Move west, and say hello to Bangladesh, although I don't know whether the hello they would return to us will be a friendly one or a hostile one. Their strategic compass is very precise. Dhaka wants access to India's North-East because it knows the region is India's gateway to the Bay of Bengal, BIMSTEC, and Mekong corridors. Here's the lesser-known reality, though:

Bangladesh is viewed by international powers as a gateway to the northeast of India. China has long been interested in its ports, and the US is now keeping a close eye on them without upsetting Delhi through defense connections and border surveillance. Because control over these networks affects regional stability, American analysts concentrate on the Siliguri Corridor and Brahmaputra routes. With commerce, energy, and border projects in mind, the EU sees the North-East as its most dependable connection to the Indo-Pacific. Japan sets itself distinct by investing billions in infrastructure, forming reliable alliances instead of using leverage, and being invited rather than intrusive.

WHAT CAN WE LEARN FROM ALL OF THIS?

To put it simply, India is being sought after rather than influenced. Today, the Northeast is by no means vulnerable. Leverage is what it is. The Trump card is what it is. China wishes to make it weaker. The US desires to be close to it. Bangladesh wishes to become a part of it. Japan desires to construct it. Routes via it are desired by Europe.

India determines who gets the handshake, who gets the partnership, and who merely gets to observe from a distance, even as the rest of the world wants access to the Northeast.

The North-East is more than just a border in a world full of aspirations, conjecture, and covert diplomacy; it is evidence of India's strategic desirability. Everybody wants a slice of the pie.



WHERE DIPLOMACY MEETS GEOGRAPHY: ASSAM AT THE HEART OF INDIA – BHUTAN TIES

A 267-kilometre frontier, shared security priorities, and transformative economic projects make Assam the linchpin of Himalayan regional cooperation.

From the editorial team of Frontier Insights

Disregard any preconceived notions you may have regarding international relations – this partnership is exceptional!

Assam, frequently perceived merely as a tranquil state in the Northeast Region, occupies a significant role as the pivotal point for all interactions between India and the serene kingdom of Bhutan. Assam possesses a distinctly influential position, serving as the vital link for India's connection with the peaceful kingdom of Bhutan. The state shares an extensive 267-kilometer border, traversing the districts of Udalguri, Tamulpur, and Kokrajhar – establishing it as the essential conduit for diplomacy, collaborative security initiatives, and important developmental projects.

This camaraderie is not a recent development; however, it was firmly established by a pivotal event that shaped regional stability: Operation All Clear. Bhutan, recognizing the threat, collaborated with India to entirely eradicate the insurgent bases concealed within their territory. Such mutual trust and decisive measures laid a substantial groundwork.

This security alliance remains robust today, reinforced by the updated Indo–Bhutan Treaty. Essentially, it states, "Bhutan, you retain your complete autonomy, but India's strategic interests are safeguarded." This agreement has proven to be a transformative factor, solidifying a relationship founded on profound, shared trust.

For many years, Assam has primarily served as a transit route for Bhutan's trade; however, it is now emerging as a significant economic participant. This is where India's 'Neighbourhood First' and 'Act East' initiatives truly come into play! In this spirit, Dr. Himanta Biswa Sarma's visit to His Majesty King Jigme Singye Wangchuck of Bhutan, and the King's forthcoming visit to India, further strengthens the Bharat–Bhutan relationship. These engagements highlight how Bharat's Assam is not only a gateway but also a partner in deepening economic and strategic cooperation, reflecting the shared vision of trust and prosperity between the two neighbours



The future appears to be accelerating! We are discussing substantial projects such as the proposed Bharat–Bhutan railway line that will traverse Assam, along with the extensive Jogighopa Multi-Modal Logistics Park (MMLP). These are not merely railways and logistics parks; they are catalysts for trade that will fundamentally alter commerce in the area.

Local border trade is flourishing, aided by Bhutan's strategic decision to maintain a visa-free entry policy for its citizens. Additionally, the recent opening or enhancement of border crossings at locations like Samdrup, Jongkhar and Gelephu is facilitating easier movement for individuals, thereby strengthening local cultural and economic connections.

One of the most uplifting aspects of this collaboration is the dedication to nature. Assam and Bhutan are united by the stunning Manas landscape, which serves as a haven for wildlife.

Bharat & Bhutan is officially collaborating through the Transboundary Manas Conservation Area. This arrangement allows forest teams from both nations to operate as a single unit, conducting joint anti-poaching efforts, monitoring habitats, and safeguarding the health of the entire ecosystem.

The outcome? A remarkable and quantifiable increase in the tiger population! This represents a significant conservation achievement that we can all take pride in. In a broader context, as the entire Northeast becomes a focal point in India's regional strategy, Assam is positioned prominently in the limelight. Its distinctive blend of geographical location, shared ecology, and rich cultural heritage renders it an essential partner in enhancing Indo–Bhutan relations. This endeavour transcends mere political stability; it aims to pave the way for sustainable development and to reinforce the vision of genuine regional cooperation throughout the Himalayas.

LEADING FROM THE FRONT

Lieutenant General Rana Pratap Kalita
on Duty, Patriotism, and the North-East

With decades of service at India's most sensitive frontiers, Lieutenant General Rana Pratap Kalita, PVSM, UYSM, AVSM, SM, VSM, exemplifies unwavering dedication, strategic vision, and the courage to lead from the front.

Q1: Have you heard about Seemanta Chetana Mancha Purvottar earlier? What are your thoughts on our organization?

A: Yes, I am familiar with Seemanta Chetana Mancha Purvottar. Having served in India's border areas in various positions within the Armed Forces, I deeply appreciate the organization's work. It is remarkable that Seemanta Chetana Mancha actively promotes socio-cultural awareness and national integrity, particularly in the nation's border regions. Such efforts are vital, especially given the historical challenges related to border stability in North-East India. Their work in inaccessible and sensitive areas is truly commendable.

Q2: Not all students from Army schools become successful. Could you share your success story?

A: It wouldn't be fair to say that students from Sainik Schools are not successful. Established in 1960, Sainik Schools across India were designed to prepare students academically, physically, and mentally for entry into the National Defence Academy (NDA) and Indian Naval Academy (INA). While not everyone can reach the highest ranks due to the competitive, pyramidal structure of the armed forces, success is not only defined by rank. Many officers retire at the colonel level yet are highly accomplished and respected for their service.

Q3: Who do you credit for your success—your school, your family, or your own dedication?

A: Many factors contributed. Sainik School played a pivotal role, shaping my personality and leadership skills from the 5th to the 11th grade. My parents instilled values of honesty, hard work, and sincerity from the beginning. My colleagues, seniors, and subordinates in the Army guided me along the way. Finally, self-confidence and determination allowed me to persevere. Together, these elements shaped my journey.



Q4: Could you tell us about your childhood, given that your son is now also serving the nation?

A: My son has been serving in the Indian Army for the past eight years. He was born and raised in an army environment, moving frequently due to my postings. Growing up among army personnel and with an upbringing near an army camp in Tamulpur, I was inspired by their dedication, which motivated both me and my son to join the Army.

Q5: Do you think patriots join the Army, or does joining the Army make one a patriot?

A: Both perspectives are interconnected. Patriotism should be instilled in every citizen from the beginning. Serving in the Army, particularly in challenging border regions, strengthens this patriotism, creating a deep sense of duty, sacrifice, and commitment to the nation.



Q6: As the first Assamese General Officer Commanding-in-Chief of the Eastern Command, what has your experience been like?

A: It has been a matter of immense pride to represent Assam in such a prestigious role. Being Assamese was an advantage, as the Eastern Command oversees the entire North-East region. My familiarity with Assam's history, geography, and the dynamics of the region allowed me to address its unique challenges more effectively.

Q7: Which regions fall under the Eastern Command?

A: The Eastern Command covers all seven North-East states, including Sikkim, West Bengal, Bihar, Odisha, and parts of Jharkhand. It also includes international borders: the India-China border in Sikkim and Arunachal Pradesh, the full Myanmar border, and the complete Bangladesh border.

Q8: You have received numerous prestigious awards, including the Param Vishisht Seva Medal and Uttam Yuddha Seva Medal. Could you share the struggles behind these achievements?

A: Every profession has challenges, and self-establishment in a demanding field is the first hurdle. My journey involved facing these challenges head-on, committing to duty with perseverance, and navigating the complexities of the Indian Army. These efforts, combined with the guidance of mentors and the support of my family, have been crucial in achieving these honors.

FROM THE EDITOR'S DESK

India's borders represent more than mere lines on a map; they embody dynamic frontiers shaped by the courage of our guardians and the resilience of the inhabitants who reside in these areas. With great pride, we introduce the inaugural issue of 'Frontier Insights', a newsletter devoted to comprehending, valuing, and enhancing India's border security framework. In the current intricate geopolitical landscape, the protection of our borders is not solely the duty of the armed forces. Civilians hold an equally crucial role; as vigilant residents, informed travellers, responsible pilgrims, and engaged partners in national security. From the villages nestled against the Himalayas to the towns bordering the deserts and coastlines, the awareness and involvement of every citizen contribute to fortifying the nation's determination.

This first edition compiles insightful perspectives on the realities of India's frontiers. In this issue, we have endeavoured to provide an overview of vulnerable corridors and the trends that influence cross-border movements, emphasizing the necessity for ongoing vigilance and readiness while closely examining the impact of aggressive neighbouring countries; their strategies, infrastructure development, and efforts to influence local populations in sensitive border areas.

As we commence this journey, our objective is unequivocal: to cultivate a deeper public comprehension of border security and to foster a sense of collective responsibility. The frontlines may seem remote for many of us, yet their importance resonates with every citizen. What Exactly we take form this issue is -

- Borders are not just guarded by soldiers with rifles; they are strengthened by the watchful eyes, steady hands, and determined citizens who become the silent sentinel of the nation.
- Vigilant residents: Those living in border villages & Towns are the first line of awareness. Their knowledge of terrain, traditions, and local networks makes them invaluable partners to safeguard Bharat.

This collective vigilance is not about fear—it is about dignity. Preparedness is not paranoia—it is patriotism. When civilians embrace their role, they transform from passive bystanders into active guardians of sovereignty. India's borders are living frontiers, shaped not only by the bravery of soldiers but also by the resilience of its people. The Army may hold the line, but it is the people who give that line meaning. If we neglect our responsibility, we weaken the very foundation of national security. If we rise to it, we ensure that Bharat's borders remain unbroken, its spirit unconquered.

Sanjay Aditya

SANJAY ADITYA SINGH
Chairman - Editorial Board



**A CITIZEN'S
VIGILANCE IS
THE NATION'S
STRENGTH**

FRONTIER  **INSIGHTS**

Published by Seemanta Chetna Mancha Purvottar



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