

AFSPA must Totally be Repealed!

The Armed Forces (Special Powers) Act that came into effect in 1958, has been playing havoc with the lives of the people and their property in North-Eastern states and Jammu & Kashmir in the name of dealing with uprisings and armed disturbances.

The people of all these states have been demanding for the full repeal of AFSPA. Particularly after the recent December incident of army personnel killing 13 civilians in Nagaland, the people of North-Eastern states are vociferously demanding for the repeal of the draconian AFSPA totally. After the outrage against the army killing civilians in Nagaland, the Home ministry on December 26 formed a committee to study if the AFSPA could be withdrawn. It appears that the said committee has given some recommendations, which are not made known to the public. It is unknown what were the terms of reference set to the said committee, to study and make its recommendations.

However in the name of basing on the said committee's recommendations, the union Home Minister Amit Shah has grandly announced that, his ministry has considerably reduced the "disturbed areas" under the AFSPA in Assam, Manipur and Nagaland. The Law Minister Riju praised this as historical decision.

But it is clearly apparent that the so-called relaxation of application of AFSPA in some areas, is made for some administrative reasons, besides facilitating the Central government to reach several agreements with some insurgent groups in Assam, Manipur and Nagaland.

With such an announcement of partial relaxation of AFSPA in some areas, the Central government is hood-winking the people and belies the real aspiration and demands of the people suffering by the cruelties of AFSPA.

The very recent incidents in Arunachal Pradesh and J&K states once again clarify that it is not the individual army personnel that are culprits but it is the AFSPA that made the army personnel the culprits and enemies of the citizens.

On April 2, the soldiers of an elite army unit of 12 paras injured two civilians at Chasa village in Tirap district of Arunachal Pradesh when they were returning after fishing. The soldiers fired upon them. When the angry villagers surrounded the army officer, he admitted that the mistake was committed after mistaking the civilians for extremists. As usual, the army ordered in to an enquiry subsequently ordering it to be a court marshalling of the officers and the concerned soldiers.

On April 7, in Handwara of Kupwara district soldiers entered in to a mosque and started filming of the noon prayers. When they were objected to not to film, they fired on the people injuring 2 persons. The incident triggered protests of the people.

Both the above incidents clearly show that it is not the individual soldiers but the AFSPA, which gave them vast powers to fire on the people indiscriminately is the real cause for such incidents.

Many committees, appointed on this issue, by the Supreme Court have clearly recommended that AFSPA be repealed, without it remaining in the statute. They pointed out that various other laws like UAPA can effectively deal with the problems of insurgencies if any.

But our rulers refuse to act according to reason and as per the wishes and aspirations of the people. That is why they are adamant in not repealing the AFSPA.

However, this state of affairs shall not be continued. The much despised AFSPA must be annulled fully.

The democratic forces shall consistently demand for the full repeal of AFSPA, until the realisation of the demand!

The AFSPA must be fully repealed.