

Editorial

Imphal, Thursday, November 5, 2015

The AFSPA is not an issue again for Congress and BJP

By-election is round the corner. And now the heavy weight politicians will be making false promises to the people once more. It is now clear the fight opponent in this upcoming by-election in Thonju and Thangmeiband Assembly constituencies will be the Congress who is power in the state and the BJP which is in power at the centre. Main issues that the people faces here are of no important to any of the two political party, but once more people will elect either of the two who had ignored the 15 years long protest of Irom Sharmila for repeal of inhumane draconian act AFSPA.

Both the congress and the BJP have valid point to remain silence on the armed forces special powers act. But why the act is only required in North eastern part of India and the state of Jammu and Kashmir, besides knowing that the temperament of crime is much more hostile in some part of the Northern India. Everyone knows that armed rebels killed at least 20 jawan in Chhattisgarh and every Indian still could not forget the serial blasts in Mumbai and also the terrorist attack at Parliament some few years back. The intensity of the crime committed in those mainland Indian states including attack in the parliament was much more terrorizing than those happen in the state of Manipur or Nagaland. Why the government is not enforcing AFSPA at those states? If the intention for enforcement of the Act is for maintenance of the law and order situations, why is the act not enforce in states like, Jharkhand, Chhattisgarh, Bihar, West Bengal and Andhra Pradesh where the problems of naxalites and armed Maoist insurgents are going out of control. This is clear message of biased attitude of the Indian government amongst its own citizens. Bad or good, if the government felt it necessary for the act to be implemented, which the people often criticized as "draconian", it should be enforced in the whole of the nation. Why is the act required only in the North Eastern part of the country and in Jammu and Kashmir and not in any other part of the country?

The stand of both the BJP and the Congress on the issue of AFSPA, no doubt prove that people in the North eastern states of the country and Jammu and Kashmir are still treated as second class citizen.

May be both the political party might have been considering that money and muscle power is still a way to win the election that is why the leaders of both the state unit leaders may require the act to please their central leadership.

Solidarity to Irom Sharmila's 15 years hunger strike against AFSPA

By: Malem Ningthouja

Comes the 5th of November 2015; it adds another year to Irom Sharmila's non-violent fight for justice against the culture of impunity enjoyed by the Indian army under the provisions of the Armed Forces Special Powers Act (AFSPA). In the 'Indian sub-continent' where the ruling regime indulges in crimes against humanity and where Gandhian Ahimsa doesn't hold the grounds, though eulogizing reminiscence of anti-colonial Satyagraha prevails; Sharmila uses her body as the weapon in the fight for justice and becomes a political prisoner. To recall, the immediate spark of this steadfast was the Malom massacre of 2nd November 2000 that killed ten innocent lives by the armed forces in Manipur.

The Armed Forces Special Powers Act is a notorious instrument of State terrorism, humiliations, prolonged detentions, tortures, killings, destructions, traumas, deprivations and disturbances; the logical culmination is unrestrained widespread culture of impunity by the law enforcing forces. This Act serves the agenda of creating a category of suspects and 'disturbed areas' to be oppressed at will; to suppress democratic voices against

Section 1 of AFSPA empowers the Governor of a State or the Government of India to construe any area or territory as disturbed or dangerous, thereby empowering any commissioned officer, warrant officer, non-commissioned officer or any other person of equivalent rank in the Armed Forces to exercise powers prescribed by AFSPA. **Section 4** of the Act empowers the concerned officer to 'suspect' and consequently act on 'his' suspicion to arrest anyone without warrant, to search any premise without warrant, destroy, and "fire upon or otherwise use force, even to the causing of death, against any person who is acting in contravention of any law or order for the time being in the disturbed area prohibiting the assembly of five or more persons or the carrying of weapons or of things capable of being used as weapons or firearms, ammunition or explosive substances." **Section 5** of the Act empowers the concerned officer to detain any arrested person with the least possible delay and does not stipulate any time frame of the detention. **Section 6** of the Act defends guilty personnel as "no prosecution, suit or legal proceeding shall be instituted, except with the previous sanction of the Government of India against any person in respect of anything done or purported to be done in exercise of the powers conferred by this Act.

I am obliged to serve for the just cause of those who would like to live without being killed. I am stubborn and firm with this belief. My cry for justice, like a child's cry to its parents, is being repeatedly forwarded to the leaders and policy makers who would at present not listen to my prayers. I firmly believe that the issues that I raised are not meant to be dealt with sticks. I would like to see that the root cause of my prayer is being discovered and addressed with softer and healing touch. I shall never give up my stand without fulfilling my demand.

Excerpt from the Statement of Sharmila Jantar Mantar, Delhi, 6 October 2006



oppressive political regimes, exploitative market forces and destructive projects. The Act is symptomatic of an undeclared war trajectory superimposed on a category of subjected peoples, whose political aspirations and democratic rights are marginalized in the name of India's security. The brutality of the colonial rule that British India had faced in the 1940s; identify it with any political jargon, we are today experiencing it in the 'disturbed areas'.

Fifteen years of Sharmila's fasting and political imprisonment, victim peoples' protests, and 'institutional' recommendations from within India and beyond have done lots of symbolic damages to the legitimacy of AFSPA. However, the State holds on AFSPA dearly, as it act as a surrogate in militarily engagement with certain political conflicts arising out of the neoliberal structural constraints. At the same time, the agencies such as the military establishment and the corrupt personnel operating on the ground uphold AFSPA, in the name of counter insurgency, as it serves certain extra-institutional personal interests. The struggle against AFSPA, therefore, remains relevant inasmuch as it targets not only the instrument of oppression but also the regime in power that suppresses democratic rights. In this context, Sharmila's fifteen years individual steadfast is commendable as it contributes to the collective struggle for justice and democratic rights. We express solidarity to the sky lantern demonstration against AFSPA to be organized by the Manipur Students' Association Delhi on 5th November, 2015.

Long live Irom Sharmila's Struggle against AFSPA
Long live peoples' struggle for democratic rights

Pick from Facebook post

Sharmila completes 15 years fast against Armed Forces Special Powers Act

Courtesy: Saroj Kumar Sharma, Senior Journalist

It was on a chilly evening on this day fourteen years ago Irom Sharmila Chanu began her fast at the roadside of Malom village in Imphal West along the Imphal-Aizawl road.

Assam Rifles troopers, in a retaliatory action three days back, massacred ten civilians including a National child bravery award winner near a bus stand at Malom.

A day ahead of her epic mission, a teary Sharmila sought blessings from her weak mother.

The courageous mother touched down her daughter's head thrice and blessed her to go ahead with the mission without fear and return back

home with flying colors. Fondly called 'Memngou' by her family, Sharmila is currently being forced-fed with liquid food through her nose at the security ward of the state-run Jawaharlal Nehru Institute of Medical Sciences (JNIMS) close to her Kongpal Kongkham Leikai residence in Imphal East. Police charged Sharmila (43) of committing under section 309 IPC (attempt to commit suicide).

The "Iron Lady of Manipur" defied the charge, saying that she had no intention to end her life but only protesting to scrap AFSPA, which gives unbridled powers to the armed forces even to shoot people on mere suspicion.

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National & International News

India favours early conclusion of code of Conduct on south china sea by consensus

PRO (Defence)

New Delhi, Nov 5: The Defence Minister ShriManoharParrikar today expressed India's hope that all parties to the disputes in the South China Sea region will abide by the 2002 Declaration on the Conduct of Parties in the South China Sea, ensure its effective implementation and work together to ensure a peaceful resolution of disputes.

Addressing the 3rd ASEAN Defence Ministers' Meeting (ADMM-plus) at Kuala Lumpur, ShriParrikar said the situation in the South China Sea and recent developments there have attracted interest and concern. "This is natural since freedom of navigation in international waters, the right of passage and overflight, unimpeded commerce and access to resources in accordance with recognized principles of international law including the 1982 UN Convention on the Law of the Sea, are of concern to all of us", he stated. He also hoped that the Code of Conduct on the South China Sea would be concluded at an early date by consensus.

Following is the full text of the Defence Minister's address:

"I am honoured to represent India at the 3rd Meeting of the ADMM-Plus. My delegation is grateful for the outstanding hospitality extended to us since our arrival yesterday. I would also like to thank our host, Malaysia, for the excellent arrangements made for this meeting.

In a short span of time since its foundation in 2010, the ADMM-Plus has emerged as a compact

and useful forum for discussing security issues among officials of the Ministries of Defence of our region. Our meetings at the level of ministers and other activities undertaken under the aegis of the ADMM-Plus are contributing to greater trust and confidence within the region.

2015 is an important year for the ASEAN. We congratulate ASEAN on its impressive achievements and wish the ASEAN Community greater success. 2015 is also the 10th anniversary of the EAST Asia Summit, whose membership footprint matches with that of ours.

ASEAN is at the heart of India's 'Act East Policy' and is central to our dream of an Asian century. As neighbours and as countries belonging to the same region, India and ASEAN member states face common security challenges both traditional and non-traditional. The overriding priority for all of us is development and the transformation of the lives of our people. A peaceful and stable regional and international security environment is critical to our goal. India has been working bilaterally and multilaterally with all the States represented here to enhance the security and stability of the region from the Indian Ocean to the Pacific. Our efforts include joint military exercises in areas such as disaster response and humanitarian assistance, training and capacity building in areas such as navigational safety and cyber security, exchange of perspectives and cooperation on counter terrorism and support for ASEAN-led initiatives for security cooperation.

ASEAN has also led useful and constructive discussions in the past couple of years on the regional security architecture. India was pleased to co-host with Cambodia, the 4th Workshop on the Regional Security Architecture in July this year. We welcome the very useful and constructive ideas presented by Indonesia, Thailand, China, Russia, Japan and others and we share the common assessment that any future framework must be centered on the 18-member EAS as a premier leaders-led forum for dialogue on strategic issues thereby reinforcing ASEAN's centrality in the evolving architecture. India would like to see a closer relationship between the EAS and the ADMM-Plus.

The five areas of cooperation that we have identified for work in the ADMM-Plus, namely, HADR, maritime security, military medicine, counter terrorism and peace-keeping operations - have progressed well through the mechanism of Expert Working Groups (EWG). India was honoured to co-Chair within Vietnam the EWG on the new area of humanitarian mine action last year. We look forward to hosting ADMM-Plus experts in the joint Humanitarian Mine Action and UN peacekeeping Operations Field Training Exercise in March 2016 in India in Pune. Going forward, we should give thought to future areas of cooperation and dialogue beyond the 2014-17 cycle. In this regard, I propose that we look at the welfare of ex-servicemen and veterans as an area of exchange of national experiences.

We are all concerned with the persistent threat of terrorism and radicalism. There can be no justification for acts of terrorism and we have to work resolutely to choke off recruitments, funding and arms for terrorists. We commend Malaysia's initiative on Global Movement of Moderates and other efforts to combat radicalisation.

Maritime security is again a common challenge. The seas and oceans in our region are critical enablers of our prosperity. The situation in the South China Sea and recent developments there have attracted interest and concern. This is natural since freedom of navigation in international waters, the right of passage and overflight, unimpeded commerce and access to resources in accordance with recognized principles of international law including the 1982 UN Convention on the Law of the Sea, are of concern to all of us. India hopes that all parties to the disputes in the South China Sea region will abide by the 2002 Declaration on the Conduct of Parties in the South China Sea, ensure its effective implementation, and work together to ensure a peaceful resolution of disputes. We also hope that the Code of Conduct on the South China Sea would be concluded at an early date by consensus.

Let me conclude by assuring you, Mr Chairman, and all my colleagues in the ADMM-Plus our full cooperation in achieving the objectives we have set for this forum. We wish Malaysia all the very best with the Summits you would be hosting shortly.