

Rights bodies slam AFSPA extension in Arunachal

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Itanagar/Guwahati: Several human rights organizations from Arunachal Pradesh on Thursday strongly opposed what they termed 'forcible imposition' of the Armed Forces Special Powers Act (AFSPA) by the Centre in 12 districts of the state. Arunachal MP and Union minister of state for home Kiren Rijiju said the Act has been temporarily extended to some districts and would be lifted as soon the situation improves.

On April 2, suspected NSCN (K) militants killed three Army personnel and injured four others in an ambush in Tirap district. The March 27 order of the ministry of home affairs (MHA) cites the presence of numerous insurgent groups along the Assam-Arunachal border, NDFB(S) setting up its headquarters in Myanmar's Tago area and planning to smuggle arms through Arunachal and Left-wing extremists trying to quietly infiltrate into the state. However, rights bodies, including the Arunachal Citizens Right, Human Rights & Law Network (Arunachal Chapter), Global Human Rights Organization, Nefa Indigenous Human Rights Organization, Arunachal Pradesh Women Welfare Society and Arunachal Indigenous Tribes Forum, fear the Act will affect the people and urged the state government to immediately take up the matter with the MHA. "The Act contravenes international human rights law and continued imposition of such an Act is tantamount to systematic violation of the right of local people. It encroaches upon the internal affairs of the state and supersedes the state government's powers such as maintaining law and order," one of the organizations said.

The controversial Act, which gives sweeping powers to personnel of the armed forces of any rank to shoot, kill or arrest a person and conduct search operations without warrants, is already in force in Tirap, Longding and Changlang districts of the state. The three districts are strategically located between Assam on the west, Nagaland on the south and Myanmar on the east. These districts have presence of NSCN (K) and NSCN (IM) militants. The Act is also in force along the 20-km belt bordering Assam. The Act was meant to particularly deal with disturbed areas and banned organizations. There are as many as 36 outlawed organizations in the country according to the MHA list. However, there is no such organization functioning in Arunachal Pradesh.

There are several instances of Army killing innocent people by using AFSPA in Tirap, Changlang and Longding, including the death of one Chuku Parpula (37) near the capital in 2007 when he was searching for his 'mithun' (deer). "If this can happen in the state capital, we are worried what might happen to common people when AFSPA is extended to other districts of the state," said a member of another organization.

<http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/city/guwahati/Rights-bodies-slam-AFSPA-extension-in-Arunachal/articleshow/46868182.cms>