

Assam, Manipur can now decide on AFSPA

In this 2010 photo, students stage a protest to demand the withdrawal of the AFSPA in New Delhi.

The Union Home Ministry is set to give up its power to impose the 'disturbed areas' tag on Assam and Manipur, both ruled by the BJP. The move effectively means it will be the States' decision to either continue the Armed Forces (Special Powers) Act (AFSPA) or revoke it.

As per Section 3 of the AFSPA, it can be invoked in places where "the use of armed forces in aid of the civil power is necessary."

A senior official told *The Hindu* that it would be the first time since 1990 — when the AFSPA was first invoked in Assam — that the Centre would give up its power to continue or discontinue it.

The AFSPA empowers the Army and Central forces deployed in "disturbed areas" to kill anyone breaking the law and arrest and search any premises without warrant. "...we have decided to rescind the power of invoking the AFSPA in two States for now: Assam and Manipur. The States are competent to decide whether they want to continue with it in entirety or impose it in a few pockets where disturbance is expected," the official said.

Another official clarified that there was no such proposal for Jammu and Kashmir.

Earlier, the Home Ministry used to issue a notification declaring States "disturbed areas" every six months. The duration was later changed to three months, pending a periodic review. On August 4, the Ministry extended the AFSPA in Assam for 27 days.

It is effective in the whole of Nagaland, Assam and Manipur (excluding seven Assembly constituencies of Imphal). In Arunachal Pradesh, it is in force in 16 police station areas and in Tirap, Longding and Changlang districts bordering Assam. Tripura withdrew the AFSPA in 2015. It is not in force in Meghalaya (except in a 20-km area along the border with Assam) and Mizoram.

To justify the continuation of the AFSPA in Assam, the Home Ministry had said in the notification that the security situation in Assam "remained vitiated owing to the belligerent attitude of the underground groups, including the ULFA(I), the NDFB(S), the KLO and the KPLT."

While 246 insurgency-related incidents were reported in Assam in 2014, the number came down to 11 in 2017 (till March 31). Cases of abduction also declined, with 94 reported in 2014 and nil from January to March this year.

In Manipur, 56 incidents were reported till March this year, while 278, 229 and 233 incidents were reported in 2014, 2015 and 2016 respectively.

Says BJP will campaign against corruption, law and order problems and lack of development work in Himachal Pradesh

The process of holding the requisite Board Meetings and Shareholder Meetings has been completed in phases in September 2017.

Ruben George is staying at Ram Nath Kovind's house at Kalyanpur, near Kanpur

END

crackIAS.com