

Everyday Lived Experiences with Armed Forces Special Powers Act (AFSPA)

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Abstract

We are witnessing a paradigm shift in the tactical management of armed conflict in modern times. It is observed that the tactics of countering armed conflicts have been refashioned, wherein laws are designed in such a way that their actions appear legitimate and justified. Yet, the infliction based on such a law is lethal, and the impact is disastrous. One such Act is the Armed Forces Special Powers Act (AFSPA), 1958. In this context, the paper has attempted to shed light on the impact of the Armed Forces (Special Powers) Act on the everyday life of the Northeasterners living under the shadow of the Act. This article attempts to understand the prevailing conditions in the region and the repercussions of AFSPA. The paper has tried to understand how it has psychologically imprinted fear in people's minds towards the security forces and how, in turn, it develops unpleasant attitudes towards them. The paper also deliberates on the abuse and misuse of power, resulting in the violation of human rights. It has also examined the correlation between the displacement of the people and the lack of development, social unrest, and migration from the Northeast (NE) to the cities outside the region in search of jobs and better opportunities. It is natural for humans to escape from conflict zone, poverty-stricken and poor infrastructure regions to look for peace and prosperity. In recent times, it is perceived that the number of migrants has increased manifold from North-eastern states¹ to other parts of the country unabated, despite language barriers, cultural differences, and many other inconveniences. Therefore, the paper also analysed the reasons as to why the high rate of migration from the region continued to take place, and at the same time, tried to understand the crisis in the face of steep migration.

Keywords: AFSPA, Armed Conflict, Disturbed Areas, Migration, Northeast India, Violence.

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I. Introduction

Some common questions often asked to the northeasterners are “What brought you here? Aren't good educational institutions or job opportunities available in your region? Wouldn't it be better for you to stay at your native place?” To respond to these questions, the answer would be yes. However, an explanation is needed as to why northeasterners migrate outside the region and search for better opportunities. There are multiple factors to this, but one of the significant factors is the existence of AFSPA and its cascading effects.

Understanding Armed Forces (Special Powers) Act, 1958

The AFSPA² is an Act which the British government promulgated on 15th August 1942, the Armed Forces³ Special Powers Ordinance (Bhattacharyya 2018), to suppress the Quit India Movement. It is a law operative in

¹The Northeastern Region comprises eight States of the Northeast viz. Arunachal Pradesh, Assam, Manipur, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Nagaland, Sikkim and Tripura. These states cover an area of 2,63,179 sq. km, approximately eight per cent of the country's total geographical area and host around 3.76 per cent of the country's total population (Bhattacharyya 2018). Around 98 percent of the boundary of these states share international borders with China, Bangladesh, Myanmar, and Bhutan, which have porous boundaries (*ibid*).

² It was the foundation for four ordinances, including one for the “Assam disturbed areas” invoked in 1947 to deal with partition-induced internal security challenges. The Armed Forces (Assam and Manipur) Special Powers Act, 1958, followed the Assam Disturbed Areas Act of 1955 to deal with the uprising in the Naga Hills and adjoining areas. However, Tripura revoked the Act in 2015, and Meghalaya was under AFSPA for 27 years, until the Ministry of Home Affairs revoked it from 1st April 2018 (Bhattacharyya 2018).

the disturbed areas⁴, including parts of the Northeast region of India (Amnesty International). The AFSPA empowers the armed forces to fire at any person indulging in rebellious activity or anyone carrying arms and ammunition. It mandates the arrest of individuals without warrants based on suspicion and the search of premises without warrants. It facilitates impunity to security personnel because no person can initiate legal action against any person of the armed forces for anything done under the Act, without permission of the Central Government (*ibid*). The Centre or the Governor of a state can impose the Act if it is of the opinion that the whole or any part of the state is in such a disturbed and dangerous condition. It is noteworthy to mention that there is no clarity regarding the conditions or criteria on which basis an area should be declared as a disturbed area. Such a vague definition gives ample scope for authorities to misuse the Act to work against certain people or even use it as a political tool by political parties for their vested interests.

The objective of the government in implementing AFSPA in the region is to curb militancy and antisocial activities so that there will be peace in the region. However, it is observed that over the last six decades, this Act has not brought about much success in curbing militancy and peace in the region as envisaged. Instead, the implementation of this infamous Act, which is also referred to as the “Draconian or Colonial law” (Bhattacharyya 2018), has had an adverse impact on the lives of the people. In contrast to the Act's objective, it has brought about more troubles and ill feelings towards the government, giving rise to militancy and deteriorating the law-and-order situation, as well as socio-economic and political conditions in the region. In the name of curbing militancy, brutal actions are meted out to innocent civilians. It is observed that there were instances, whenever targeted operations were conducted by the security forces against the insurgencies, the innocent civilians would be the recipients of the brutalities which amount to physical torture, rape, and killings where women and children were not spared. The repercussions of such brutal actions of security forces invariably result in provoking the youths to join militant movements and take up arms against the state.

II. Methodology

The paper is based on both primary and secondary sources. Primary sources include telephonic interviews and questionnaires deployed via Google Forms to get first-hand information. Social media platforms like Facebook, WhatsApp and Instagram were deployed to get public opinion. The field study was conducted among the students & migrants, in-service & retired security personnel, affected people, social activists & public leaders from Manipur and Nagaland. Trips were undertaken to conduct the assessment in 2018 and 2021 to oversee the ground realities. Besides, my own lived experiences as I grew up in the region. Visited migrant workers and students in the Delhi-NCR region for interviews. Secondary sources such as books, journals, national & regional newspapers, and online sources were used. The paper maps the broad contours of the eight Northeast states; however, the micro-level study is limited to Manipur and Nagaland.

Impact of AFSPA on Everyday Life

A few interviewees also opined that completely doing away with AFSPA, the affairs of the public may be challenging due to probable interference from the insurgents. In addition, insurgencies in the region could grow exponentially, worsening the situation. However, the AFSPA has hampered the NE regional development and growth directly or indirectly. It has rendered people voiceless and rightless. When civilians go voiceless and helpless against atrocities, security forces have the absolute say. Under AFSPA, the abuse of power by the security forces was rampant. Often, military forces would stop and frisk civilians anywhere and anytime during patrolling

or at designated places. Civilians will be asked to get out of vehicles for frisking, whether public, commercial, or private vehicles, and line them up for security checks. Individual identity will be asked, personal bags will be checked, and a body search will be conducted, even on women at times by male security forces. However, it is a fact that not every individual was issued an identity card before the Aadhaar card was rolled out. Non-possession of an identity card will be taken for interrogation and detained or taken to their camps for needless investigations

by the security forces on mere suspicion, which was a nuisance and intimidating, particularly to the illiterate folks. Security forces often take to task, particularly, the teenage boys and unemployed youths, who would be harassed and sometimes physically assaulted for petty reasons like non-possession of an identity card for no

³The term “armed forces” refers to both armed and paramilitary forces operating in disturbed areas, such as the Border Security Force (BSF), Assam Rifles, Rashtriya Rifles, Sikh Regiment, National Security Guards (NSG), and others (Amnesty International).

⁴It means an area which is for the time being declared by notification under section 3, to be a disturbed area.

fault of theirs, or inability to answer due to lack of knowledge or language barriers. This affects the free movement of the people living in the region.

The abuse of power by the military forces towards the perpetrators has left an indelible psychological fear imprinted in the minds of the people who are affected by the Act. Fear of people towards the military uniforms at sight amongst children and women is a common phobia in the region. The abuse of AFSPA has negatively affected the whole atmosphere among the people. They cannot freely venture out of the house or their village, which has resulted in restricting the movement of people. This has a grievous impact on socio-economic activities as well.

Carrying out economic activities would be viewed with suspicion as collaborating with insurgent groups. Vehicles carrying goods will invariably be stopped and checked, and they will be unnecessarily harassed, exceeding the mandated power of the military forces, thereby encroaching on the day-to-day private affairs of the people, under the cover of AFSPA. The fear of harassment from the security forces, resulting in the early closure of businesses and offices, is a grave matter. The daily business establishments and commercial activities must be closed before sunset in view of the prevailing situation. This has greatly hampered economic progress in the areas covered by AFSPA under the pretext of national security, resulting in deprivation of economic progress, which is a means of livelihood. This is tantamount to a violation of the fundamental right to live. Such a scenario also adversely affects the smooth functioning of educational institutions, offices, financial institutions, etc. As the day-to-day affairs of offices or institutions are affected, it creates a conducive environment for unfair practices, especially in government offices. The officials in any government department exploit the situation to find excuses not to perform their duties promptly and regularly. Sometimes, such a vacuum allows politicians to manipulate and exploit the environment to secure their political score. The flow of files in offices are retardedly slow, sometimes deliberately hauled by authorities to exploit the environment. Due to long, inordinate, and deliberate work delays, out of desperation, people had to pay bribes to the officials to get their work done. Hence, people had to resort to corruption to avoid inconvenience and get their job done quickly. Under such conditions, people had to resort to bribery, and corruption became rampant and gradually imbibed itself as part of work culture in official dealings. Now, any work in the office, nothing moves without greasing the palms of the concerned officials. So, it is more challenging to find a job, particularly for the poor, because of the prevalent corrupt practices and nepotism. This pushes the educated youths to migrate to the cities for jobs.

It is also observed that the psychosomatic symptoms are found among people on account of AFSPA, including children. Many people, particularly women, still develop panic attacks at the sight of camouflage uniforms or security personnel. And amongst children, right from early childhood, boys are fond of military uniforms, toys such as guns, helicopters, etc. Almost all the children interviewed would say their dream or aim is to become an army man. Inspiration drawn behind such ideas amongst the children is derived from the fear of people against the security forces as a sign of the power & authority. For others, inspirations were drawn out of a revengeful nature, especially the children of the victims of atrocities meted out by the security forces. For such children, animosity towards the security forces could develop when they grow up. There were also instances where women have taken up arms and joined insurgency groups in retaliation for the abuse meted out to them or their family members. Therefore, when AFSPA is being used indiscriminately without accountability, it grossly violates human rights, and it is a threat in its entirety not only to a particular region but to the national integrity as well. There is even fear among youth and middle-aged men to wear camouflage dress, as it is susceptible to suspicion and will be taken to task. Security forces have become a valiant image in the minds of the people. When children are disobedient or throw tantrums at their parents, they would invoke the name of security forces to frighten or stop them and bring them to submission or control their emotions.

Episodes of Atrocities Perpetrated by the Security Forces

Having seen the impact of AFSPA, it is also essential to examine some of the instances of atrocities that have happened. A few include the 1960 Pochury incident, December 1970 Cheswezy, 1987 Sheanghah Mokok⁵ & Oinam Operation Bluebird, 1994 Mokokchung, 1995 Akuluto & Kohima incidents⁶, 15th

⁵ On the ill-fated day, 13 civilians from Sheanghah Mokok village, Nagaland, were fired upon by the security forces while returning from the field, even after they declared themselves as civilians. Out of thirteen, three were shot dead on the spot while the rest were gravely injured (Nagaland Page).

⁶ On March 5, 1995, at Kohima town, the security forces, upon the tyre bursting of their convoy, seven persons, including a few minor children, were killed while 22 persons were injured from the firing of the security forces. In the incident, 15 were physically assaulted and 22 persons, including 14 women, were arrested and tortured (*ibid*).

August 1996 Tseminyu experience, Malom incident in 2000⁷, and the recent one in Oting on 4th and 5th December 2021 (Nagaland Page 2021), to name a few.

Fake encounters were frequently taking place in the region under the disguise of AFSPA; however, the rest of the country is kept in the dark, as national media hardly exposes the dark side of the activities of the security forces. Therefore, people live in silence under constant fear. Frequently, whenever atrocities are meted out to civilians, their response would invariably be mistaken identity for the act. And the culprits are not brought to justice under the shield of AFSPA, and the truths are not brought to light. One such incident is Operation Bluebird. On 9th July 1987, one of the infamous military operations was carried out by the Indian security forces known as the “Operation Bluebird” at Oinam Hill⁸. On this day, security forces launched a counter-insurgency mission in the aftermath of the attack, and it continued for more than three months of search operations in the area, covering about thirty villages in and around the place of attack (Pereira, *et. al.* 2016). During the search operation, the security forces exacted revenge on the civilians and committed horrible crimes and violated human rights, which some activists called a “Holocaust” (Haskar 2019). The human rights violations committed by the security forces includes 27 deaths due to torture or starvation including several rape and sexual abuse of women, including minors, 300 men were tortured and some permanently incapacitated, more than 100 homes were burnt, schools were dismantled and even forcing two pregnant women to give birth to their babies in full view of the security forces (*ibid*). All such atrocities were perpetrated against the civilians under the cover of AFSPA. Though a case against these atrocities was filed in the court for justice, the case was deliberately dragged on for decades, employing dilatory tactics by the government mechanism until twenty-eight years later, when the case was finally disposed of in July 2019, citing lack of evidence (*ibid*).

In another infamous rape and murder case, a 32 year old woman, Thangjam Manorama was picked from her house in the wee hours by the 17th Assam Rifles on 10 July 2004, on the charge that she was an associate of a banned militant outfit, the People Liberation Army (PLA) of Manipur. Later she was raped and killed by the security forces on 11 July wherein the security forces tried to portray the incident that she was killed during the encounter (Rehman 2017). The Assam Rifles finally claimed that she had been shot while trying to escape, which was a habitual response for the justification of any fake encounter. Following which, there were widespread protests in reaction to the incident, including the unprecedented nude protest by women folk on 15 July 2004, in front of the Assam Rifles headquarters at Kangla Fort in Imphal. Twelve mothers stood naked in public view to protest the killing by losing their hair as a mark of mourning (*ibid*).

And one of the most recent horrific incidents of such encounter was the incident at Oting⁹ in Mon District of Nagaland, where 14 unarmed civilians¹⁰ were killed, and a few were critically injured. They were returning home from mining work in Tiruvalley, and they were ambushed at around 4:10 pm. Without warning them or any provocation on 4 December 2021, the 21st Para Special Forces of Assam Rifles fired indiscriminately (The Morung Express, 2021). Those killed were all unarmed civilians and possessed no arms, travelling in an open Mahindra pickup truck in broad daylight (*ibid*), where the case was taken as a mistaken identity. This incident took place a few kilometres away from Oting village. It was a tragic moment for all the

⁷ A day after the Malom incident in Manipur, where ten people were killed by Indian security forces in the year 2000, Irom Chanu Sharmila, who is also popularly known as the Iron Lady, went straight to her mother seeking for her blessing and began the hunger strike for removal of AFSPA for 16 years (Bhonsle 2016).

⁸ Oinam Hill, also called as Onaeme village is a Poumai Naga village situated at a distance of 40 kms from District Head Quarter Senapati, Manipur.

⁹ Oting is a medium size village located in Mon Sadar Circle, Mon district, Nagaland with a population of around 1266. The literacy rate of Oting was 33.18% as compared to 79.55% of Nagaland. And the rate of male literacy was 37.12% while female was 28.51% as per the 2011 census, which is far below the national average (Census 2011).

¹⁰ It was reported that innocent victims who were from humble backgrounds killed at Oting include a victim whose father is a cancer patient and who badly needs his son's physical and financial assistance, another victim was the only son of their parents and one victim was left with his pregnant wife. Another victim was married just nine days ago, and in the incident, twin brothers were killed who left behind their old-age parents and two victims were left with their young wives and their children, who are four months and two months old. One of the victims, who was also the sole breadwinner of the family, was left with four children, including a one-year old child and his wife. Among the victims, one of the two brothers was killed and the other was left seriously injured; and the others who were killed were the sole breadwinners of their respective families (Wangsa 2021).

victims as well as the surviving members, as they were innocent breadwinners of the family, returning home after a week-long hard work.

The above incidents are a few which have been brought to public notice. Besides the incidents mentioned above, there are several cases where people could not fight for justice against the high-handedness and atrocities of the security forces, as the authorities would defensively interpret the loosely woven Act to cover up the misdeeds and misuse of power.

AFSPA and Migration

By nature, human beings are peace-oriented beings. They love to be in a place where there is peace and escape from a place where there is turmoil and trouble. It is an aspiration for everyone to move to greener pastures with better opportunities and facilities, which is one of the reasons for migration. Thus, in the case of Northeast migrants, migration to the cities usually happens compulsively as a push factor due to the lack of facilities and opportunities in their respective home states.

Coincidentally, India's economic reforms in the 1990s gave ample opportunity to allow massive migration from the region to other cities. During this period, owing to the lack of employment opportunities and infrastructure facilities, the northeasterners migrated to different parts of the country for employment and better livelihoods. Prior to economic liberalisation, migration occurred within the NE regions. Shillong and Guwahati used to be the top destinations for higher education. However, with the reform period, the northeastern migrants shifted their destination from Guwahati and Shillong to other major cities due to the availability of opportunities. Quoted from Mcduie-Ra (2016), in a survey released by the *North-East Support Centre and Helpline* in early 2011, the total number of migrants from the Northeast was 4,14,850. Delhi, Bangalore, Calcutta, etc., were the top destinations amongst students and job seekers. However, lately, Delhi is no longer the most preferred destination as it was before due to ethnocentric attitudes meted out by insiders to the outsiders or the so-called migrants from the NE aftermath the following instances such as the Dhaula Kuan rape case, Nido Tania¹¹, Akha

Salouni,¹² are among others. Thus, in recent years, the destination has shifted from Delhi to other parts of the country, particularly South and West India. Besides, the COVID-19 pandemic has also walloped the migrants.

One of the urgent needs of the NE people now is quality higher education because, as per the field survey, it is observed that the highest number of migrants shared the reason for migration is higher education. However, after graduating, many end up doing a part-time job or in the private sector, as there are no employment opportunities in the states back home and only a few could join the government sector. The NE states perform better in primary and secondary level than in higher education. To improve the higher education sector, the assistance of the Central Government is necessary, as education comes under the concurrent list of Schedule VII. Investment in human resources and updating the curriculum should be taken care of to make the quality of education on par with the central educational institutes. Moreover, even the existing institutes lack basic infrastructure and cannot function properly due to poor management. The reasons for such mismanagement are frequent bandhs & strikes, law & order situation, backdoor appointments, nepotism and corruption during the recruitment process, and some of these problems are the effect of AFSPA. Therefore, the prevailing situation compels NE students to go to the cities for quality education after completing senior secondary school.

Another primary reason for northeastern migration is looking for job opportunities. It is a sad scenario that even after 75 years of Independence, some states are made to depend entirely on the Centre. The NE states are being neglected in terms of basic infrastructure. Basic infrastructure, such as electricity, telecommunication

¹¹ In January 2014, when Nido Tania was looking for a friend's place in Lajpat Nagar and stopped by the dairy shop to enquire for directions. However, two workers at the shop made fun of his mongoloid looks and hair styles. Then, irritated Nido who happened to be the son of an MLA from Arunachal reacted to the insult which broke out into scuffle and he was beaten. Later, he succumbed to internal injuries as per the post-mortem report (Bhonsle 2016).

¹² Another incident was the murder of Akha Salouni, a 29-year-old man who hailed from Manipur, who was beaten to death by five men in Kotla Mubarakpur, Delhi. While an eyewitness who was with Salouni at the time of the incident told police that they had attacked without provocation. Minister of State for Home, Shri Kiren Rijiju, on his visit to the AIIMS Trauma Centre, said that the repeated attacks on people from Northeast states were a matter of great concern for the government, and the attack seems to have been coordinated and planned (Lama 2014).

facilities, roads, railways, etc., needs to be improved. And most NE states do not have full access to railways except Assam and a few kilometres stretch of railways in Nagaland. In July 2021, Manipur was added to the railway network map (Hindustan Times 2021). However, the infrastructure of the railway network in the NE region is in a pathetic condition. The speed of trains is drastically slower in the NE region. Therefore, the lack of attention by the central government can be attributed to the backwardness of the NE states, which ultimately resulted in a lack of avenues for generating employment opportunities. Without good infrastructure, no state can progress economically. This eventually led to NE migration to the cities to seek a job. Had the NE states been given basic infrastructure, this large-scale, unproductive migration could have been prevented; those who migrate to the cities just for sustenance are unable to save any of their earnings.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, reverse migration occurred, and a substantial population returned home. In the ensuing melee, the NE migrants faced a lot of hurdles. When lockdown was imposed, some of the employers withheld the salary. As the remuneration was stopped, they were in a checkmate state as they could not pay their rent, while they were under pressure from landlords to pay the rent. On the other hand, they were required to meet their daily needs. Some have to forgo their hard-earned unpaid salary and leave for home, while others do not get the minimum wage as per law. Adding to their woes, they could not get employment when they reached home. It is not that they are incompetent, but no job opportunities were available.

Some interviewees responded that they will not return to cities due to difficulties, whereas a few stated they would return to work when the COVID situation improved. However, after the opening up of economic activities and improvement of the COVID-19 situation, the migrants started to return to the cities, though the number has substantially reduced. This reduction in migration is because of the unavailability of employment opportunities in the post-COVID-19 situation. Nonetheless, it is also observed that migration of the NE people will continue unabated until a sustainable and drastic reformation occurs in the region. This reveals the existence of acute desperation amongst the youths in general for want of quality education, employment, better infrastructure facilities, etc. Both the state and the centre need to tackle the situation with long-term sustainable measures to address the issue.

The centre invariably tends to view the unrest in the region as a law-and-order problem, and the centre's best wisdom to respond to the issue is to enforce AFSPA. By ignoring the facts, the centre has left the root causes of conflict and unrest, thereby contributing to the growth of armed movements within the region (Pereira, *et.al.* 2016). The grievances of the people are about their identity issues, encroachment of their land by immigrants,

attack on their culture and economic factors like backwardness, lack of employment opportunities, poverty, etc. It is observed that there has been a multiplication of insurgency groups in the last six decades, and many insurgent organisations do not know their origin (Walter 2004). As a result, some organisations survive purely as extortionists under the deceptive appearance of insurgents without a popular support base from society (*ibid*). Hence, the insurgency problem in the NE did not sprout out from one reason but from multiple causes such as identity crisis, socio-cultural & political issues, immigrants, law and order and economic issues. AFSPA alone cannot solve the problems; instead, the negative impression of AFSPA aggravated the insurgency problem. Therefore, if the centre is serious in resolving the issues in the NE, a holistic approach like accepting their differences, preserving culture, safeguarding the interest of the indigenous people, equal treatment and representation in decision-making is necessary to solve the issues in the NE region. In short, social, economic, political, and cultural issues should be tackled to progress on par with other regions.

III. Conclusion

India is a democratic country wherein every individual enjoys equal rights under the Constitution of India, which includes the right to life. AFSPA cannot be legalised as a right to eliminate people in the name of peace, who also have every right to live like you and me. Peace cannot come about through violence or coercion imposed from above. But peace should be inclusive, just, dignified and honourable. A nation is not defined by its ability or capacity to make war or have economic power alone; it is also judged by its ability and willingness to make peace and provide well-being for its citizens. AFSPA has not only weakened the Indian democratic values, but it has also tarnished the image of the country. AFSPA should not be employed under the pretext of national security to hinder the basic fundamental rights of its citizens, and any restrictions on fundamental rights should be proportionate to the good of the nation and reasonably adhere to principles of the rule of law. Currently, the people affected by the Act are annoyed with the security forces for the inconvenience. One of

the measures to improve the situation of the NE is to amend the AFSPA so that the security forces do not resort to disproportionate use of force or replace it with another suitable Act.

Thus, attempts to create peace in the region with development and progress without coercion may yield a long-lasting peace, as every individual desires peace. Otherwise, neither special financial packages nor AFSPA can ameliorate the NE issues if suppressed unjustly. Therefore, the Centre should give holistic attention to the region. It is crucial to keep in mind that the entire NE region does not always have homogeneous problems; thus, the problem should not be treated homogeneously; they also have different internal issues that vary from state to state. Therefore, inclusive representation from every community is required for any decision-making. Experts from various academic fields to deal with the regional problems will be an apt and practical approach.

Many quoted insurgencies as the reason for the lack of development in the Northeast region and the corporate's reluctance to invest. However, that's not the absolute truth. If that should be the concern, then the Digboi refinery in Assam, the oldest refinery of the country which is performing well like other refineries in the country since 1901, is a living proof that if the same care is given by the government to other sectors as well, then, it can excel in their performance. As a saying goes, "If you give a man a fish, you feed him for a day. If you teach a man to fish, you feed him for a lifetime." Therefore, giving them monetary packages or providing them with monthly rations alone without the other means to grow will not serve the purpose; instead, teaching them how to stand on their foot by investing in the region is the need of the hour.

It is interesting to note that in recent times, the centre has felt the seriousness of AFSPA after the Oting incident and has announced partial withdrawal of AFSPA in Assam, Manipur and Nagaland from 1st April 2022 within three months of the incident. Further, Prime Minister Narendra Modi has also announced on 1st April that the government of India is making an effort to remove AFSPA from the entire region completely. Such a step to de-militarise the region by the centre is a welcome initiative, and it will lead to positive changes and bring peace in the NE region.

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