

THE BEACON

PRACTICE NEWS BULLETIN OF THE PG STUDENTS OF JOURNALISM AND MASS COMMUNICATION

Wednesday, 15 December, 2021 / St. Joseph's College (Autonomous) / Vol: 15 Issue: 61 / www.sjcdeptcomm.wordpress.com

Has the time come for the AFSPA to be repealed?

The Armed Forces Special Powers Act (AFSPA), 1958 is an act of Parliament of India that vests sweeping powers in the hands of the Indian Armed Forces to keep the situation under control in the "disturbed areas". According to the Disturbed Areas (Special Courts) Act, 1976, once an area is announced as 'disturbed', the region needs to be under the AFSPA for at least 3 months.

In November 2016, the Government of India had extended AFSPA in three regions of Arunachal Pradesh-Tirap, Changlang, and Longding. The act has been fully repealed in Meghalaya, Mizoram, parts of Manipur as those regions have returned to normalcy.

For Upper Assam, South Arunachal & Nagaland, the government wants to continue imposing AFSPA because insurgency still exists. The



Representational image

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act has additionally been extended by half a year in three regions of Arunachal Pradesh. There is more than one version of the tragic incident that happened in Nagaland last week.

While the Home Minister on the floor of Parliament stated that the Assam Rifles tried to stop the vehicle and opened the fire only after the orders were not heeded to,

the eye-witness account mentions that no such warning to stop was flagged. Instead, there was indiscriminate firing from the forces on the coal mine workers returning to their houses. This incident has dented the peace negotiations with the insurgent groups which seemed to have made some progress so far. The entire northeast region has turned volatile. We have

had a greater number of incursions through the borders of Bangladesh, and Myanmar in the last few years than through Pok.

Even today, the Rohingyas come in large numbers and cause disharmony and disrupt peace. If the Army is not given the power to check, search and take action, the entire north-eastern region will be up in flames and may go out

of hand. Repealing AFSPA will be detrimental as it will give a free run to these insurgents.

The police are clearly ill-equipped to counter this threat. AFSPA has been removed from many districts in the Northeast depending on the status of the insurgency there. Repealing the AFSPA in the wake of the incident at Mon will be a knee-jerk reaction. Any decision on repealing it should be borne out of a comprehensive evaluation of the security situation of the region.

What happened in Nagaland was unfortunate; the intelligence agency has to be more prudent and avoid such blunders in the future. Such incidents would further alienate the people and strengthen the hands of the insurgents. However, the time to repeal the AFSPA has not come yet.

Arushi Srivastava

BNU students protest, allege discrimination in BCU

Madhu Mitha

BENGALURU: Students of Bengaluru North University protested against the lack of basic facilities in the University, in Tamaka, Kolar on Friday.

In addition, they also demanded that Bengaluru City University should increase the number of PG seats for the students of BNU.

A very few BCU PG seats are reserved for the students who have graduated from BNU, despite students having performed well in their under-graduation, they allege. Vasudev, state secretary of the Student Federation of India (SFI) said, "A university should maintain minimum infrastructure and quality of education, which is not taken care of in BNU. All the PG courses should be opened soon, permanent faculty should be allotted. Out of 6000 students in BNU only 130 seats are allotted for PG courses, this is causing trouble to the students."

Soma Shekar, vice-president of SFI said, students should not be discriminated against. He stated that BCU should allow students from other universities to apply for the courses. "Until we get justice, we are not stepping back from the protest. We are having a meeting with the Dean of BCU in the presence of SFI to further discuss the issue," he added.

A meeting will be held on 15 with the dean of BCU to further discuss about the issue.

TRANSFORM 2021: Raising the voice for equal opportunities

Bincy Joseph

BENGALURU: There exists a significant gap between the statistical information on transgenders as provided by the Ministry of Labour & Employment when compared with that of 'normal', male-female labour force, alleged Anindya Hajra the co-founder of Pratyay Gender Trust on Sunday.

She was speaking at the fifth National Conference on Transgender Rights and Law - 'TRANSFORM' organized by Centre for Law and Policy Research held at Bangalore International Center, Domlur on December 11 and 12. Discussions were held on topics such as access and equality for transgender people in education, reproductive justice & rights and, gender at the workplace. The meeting highlighted the importance of transgender people in significant leadership roles. Vikram Aditya Sahai, a Research Associate at CLPR speaking said that whenever they faced a moment of weakness, they would turn to the leaders of the community to gather courage and the community would support them.

A last-ditch effort to save the bio-diverse space

Sutapa Dhara

BENGALURU: The All Saints' Church in Central Bangalore is up in arms against the proposal of BMRCL to acquire an additional 800 square metres of its land, Sacred Grove which is currently being used for the congregation. If BMRCL has its way then around 100 trees will be axed and 25 species of birds spread over an acre of land will be affected, say the activists belonging to Environmental Support Group. The BMRCL has already acquired 3500 square metres of land belonging to the church



A just fight: Banner at the contentious site

Sutapa

earlier. However, this additional stretch of the land was not part of the Detailed Project Report, allege the activists.

On Sunday, people from the Church Congregation Association and other supporters

held a protest followed by a street play by the Theatre Group of St. Joseph's College. "The area where the grove stands has been designated for excavation to make way for Air vents," said Janani from the ESG. "Her-

Prices of staple food will soar until Sankranti, consumers worried

Pushparaj C

BENGALURU: The steep hike in the vegetables and provisions has left the consumers from the lower rung of society, high and dry. The latest prediction that the skyrocketing trend is here to stay until the next cycle of cultivation that is until Sankranti has alarmed many. "The price is too much and for the public, it is problematic, especially when the in-

come is low. On the daily basis we receive the wages, per day, and five hundred is what we receive.. managing our day to day life (with this), is difficult..." said Shashi Devi aged 37, who has been working as a Porakarmika since eight years. Wajid Khan, a 44-year-old auto driver said that a lot of people do not have enough income, they hardly receive three hundred to four hundred per day."

Punjab crowned champions in hockey finals

Siddhant Garud

BENGALURU: Punjab won with a huge margin of 7-1 against Indo-Tibetan Border Police in the Police Hockey championship finals held at Karnataka State Hockey Association Stadium on Saturday evening. Punjab started off their quarter with aggression scoring their first goal within the first ten minutes.

The crowd gazed at the match animatedly and showed no sign of weariness even after the seventh goal was scored by Punjab,



A moment of glory

Special arrangement

whereas ITBP could only score one through the four quarters. Olympic Player Ramandeep Singh was injured below the eye, and had to pull out from the finals. Speaking to The Beacon, he narrated his experiences in the 2016 Olympics and

the 2020 Olympic camp for hockey. When asked about his future aspirations he said, "Right now I want to see the young talent of our nation flourish. Nothing is final, as yet for me, but I do want to teach youngsters in my future."