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Title: Need to take steps to repeal the Armed Forces Special Power Act and Public Safety Act.

SHRI M.B. RAJESH (PALAKKAD): Mr. Chairman, Sir, I have been waiting to raise this issue throughout the entire Session.

Sir, I would like to draw the attention of this House to an important issue relating to Kashmir. It is almost two years since stone pelting youth took to streets protesting against the high handedness and unaccountable actions of the security forces. Over 120 people, mostly youth, lost their lives in police firing during the protests. Following the turmoil in the Kashmir Valley, Members of Parliament across the political spectrum visited Kashmir and promised to pursue steps to restore peace and normalcy. The Union Government also appointed a 3-member team of interlocutors to recommend steps to resolve the crisis. The team had submitted its report in October, 2011. However, nothing has happened since then and there has been no initiative by the Union Government towards restoring normalcy in Kashmir. It is precisely this insensitive approach which breeds frustration and alienation among the Kashmiri youth.

Sir, the Chief Minister of Jammu and Kashmir has been demanding a phased withdrawal of the Armed Forces Special Powers Act from Kashmir. This demand has received support from many quarters. Phased withdrawal of the Armed Forces Special Powers Act and gradual reduction of troop levels in the Kashmir Valley will be a substantive confidence building measure.

The Public Safety Act has also been used to harass and intimidate innocent persons who have no links with terrorism. These draconian laws need to be withdrawn to restore normalcy. Fighting terrorism does not require harassing innocent people using draconian laws.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Please conclude now. Otherwise, I am going to call the next Member.

SHRI M.B. RAJESH : So, I urge upon the Union Government to take immediate steps to repeal the Armed Forces Special Powers Act and the Public Safety Act which will go a long way in restoring peace and normalcy in Kashmir.