

Dr Sandeep Pandey to attend solidarity fast in Imphal



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Eminent social scientist and Ramon Magsaysay Awardee Dr Sandeep Pandey will attend the Meet the Press programme at the Guwahati Press Club on September 12. Dr Pandey will attend a three-day solidarity fast, organised by the 'National Alliance of People's Movement' and the 'Manipur Forward Youth Front' (MAFYF), in Imphal from September 13 to 15 to protest against the Armed Forces Special Powers Act, 1958 (AFSPA), and in support of Irom Sharmila Chanu's ongoing struggle against the law.

Many human rights activists from all over the country as well as from neighbouring countries will assemble in Imphal.

One of the founder members of 'Asha' (a non-profit organisation for Education), Mr Pandey was awarded with the Asian Nobel in 2002 in the category of Emergent Leadership for his work towards the uplift of the poor and the underprivileged in India. An engineering graduate from the prestigious University of Berkeley, Pandey later used to teach at IIT Kanpur, but he soon shifted his endeavor to bring hope for the underprivileged sections of the society.

Sapamcha Jadumani, president of the Manipur Forward Youth Front (MAFYF), said that the solidarity fast is being organised to demand the

complete repeal of the AFSPA and to garner support for Sharmila. Thirty-seven-year old Sharmila is a woman activist of Meitei Manipuri community, and is known for her campaign against the controversial AFSPA.

Sharmila had gone on hunger strike on November 2, 2000 demanding the repeal of the AFSPA, after soldiers of the Assam Rifles allegedly killed ten young Meitei men in Malom. Three days later, police arrested Sharmila on charges of "attempted suicide", because suicide or attempted suicide is a criminal offence under Indian law. She was later remanded to judicial custody. To keep her alive, she was forcefully fed a cocktail of vitamins, minerals, laxatives, protein supplements and lentil soup through the nose with a rubber pipe. Several human rights organisations from across the country, as well as NRI groups from abroad, are also backing this programme.

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