

Jehlum Post News|Srinagar| Apr 16, 2014| Stating that recommendations on revocation of Armed Forces Special Powers Act (AFSPA) have been forwarded to army headquarters in Delhi, Lt Gen Gurmit Singh is the General Officer Commanding (GOC) of Chinार Corps on Wednesday said that army will ensure and maintain zero tolerance

for human rights violations in Kashmir. “We in the Chinार Corps have given our recommendations/perspectives on AFSPA to our higher headquarters. The prerogative to take a decision thereafter rests with the Government,” Lt Gen Gurmit Singh told in an exclusive interview with the Kashmir Magazine. He however, added that there is definitely a requirement of legal provisions and immunity for a person who is operating out in Jammu and Kashmir. “But more than this aspect, it is our responsibility, and whatever powers are given within the AFSPA, it will be ensured that we do not overstep our authority, even by an iota more than what is required. It is an enabling Act for our soldiers, as they need to have legal provisions. In the same context, it is also a commitment of the Chinार Corps that we will never misuse this law,” he added. The GoC Chinार Corps said that it is an absolute commitment of the army that they will ensure and maintain zero tolerance for human rights violations. “No soldier or commander on ground, who commits any act of indiscipline wherein he has trampled on the dignity of people, will be spared. All troops have been sensitized that the Awaam is one of our Centres of Gravity. They are and always will remain a part of our extended family,” he told Kashmir Magazine.

Commenting on overall security situation in Kashmir, Lt Gen Singh said the security situation on both the LoC and in the hinterland is well under control. “You are aware that in June 2013 when I took over as the GOC of Chinार Corps, we had the Hyderpora incident in which we lost eight brave soldiers. Thereafter, we carried out an in-depth and holistic review of our procedures and set our targets on certain key aspects. The first aspect that we focused on was our professionalism. And we knew that we had to introspect from the angle of basic and professional training, to focus on two ‘Centers of Gravity’—one, the Soldier and second, the Awaam (People).” He said the army has instilled a sense of fire discipline into soldiers, that unless and until a militant fires at them, they will not return the fire. “We cannot afford to make a mistake of wrong identification. Secondly, we have explained to them that the local militants are a misguided lot, having been abetted and exploited by propaganda. They will always be given a chance to be apprehended and not eliminated,” the GoC Chinार Corps added. When asked about his opinion about the year 2014 and the two elections this year, the GoC Chinार Corps said the level of militant activity has been more as compared to last year. “2014 is definitely going to be a challenging year. There will be an increase in infiltration bids as also militant activities, keeping in mind the heightened electoral pitch.”

Asked about the recent controversy over Lolab encounter in which seven militants were killed in one go, Lt Gen Singh said: “It was one of the finest examples of professionally executed military operations. We were aware, based on our intelligence network, that there was movement of militants in the area. In the present operation, a small operative party had gone on a speculative patrol in the area and observed movement there. Contact was established with the militants and they were effectively eliminated. The uniqueness of this operation was that all seven

militants were Pakistani and they were killed without any casualty to our troops. To the general unsuspecting mind, it was something unique and was unbelievable. As such, the inimical elements launched a black propaganda campaign on the operation.” He said that it is firm belief of army that all operations have to be professional, truthful and ethical. “We in the Chinar Corps diligently believe and maintain that anything which is untruthful, unethical in a multi-agency scenario can never be swept under the carpet. The life span of an untruthful and unethical operation in this environment is between 18 to 24 hours. We are working under the constant glare of media, as part of a multi-agency syndrome. It is our resolve to enable and ensure completely truthful, ethical and professional operations by soldiers of the Chinar Corps.”