

## Over 50 injured as Kashmir simmers over land row

Over 50 people, including 15 security personnel, were injured in violence across Kashmir Friday as the agitation against the land allotment to the Amarnath shrine authorities entered its fifth day. The annual Hindu pilgrimage to the cave shrine was also temporarily suspended.

Massive demonstrations were held across [Srinagar](#) city and thousands of people marched through the city centre Lal Chowk, shouting pro-freedom and anti-India slogans. Protesters hoisted flags on the Clock Tower, an important landmark of the city.

Several other processions led by Jammu and Kashmir Liberation Front (JKLF) chairman Yasin Malik and other separatist leaders passed through Lal Chowk that became the centre of the protests, reminiscent of the early days of militancy.

A number of Imams (Islamic clerics) also led marches from various parts of the city that passed through Lal Chowk after the weekly Friday prayers.

Mobs turned violent at a number of places. While security force bunkers were set on fire at Babar Shah and Maisuma localities, protesters set ablaze a liquor shop and huts inside a public park in the upscale Boulevard road area.

Mobs also tried to vandalize a police station at Soura, 10 km from Lal Chowk, but police dispersed the unruly crowds by lobbing tear gas shells and resorting to baton charge.

In the northern district of Ganderbal, protesters pelted stones at the house of state Forest Minister and senior ruling People's Democratic Party (PDP) leader Qazi Muhammad Afzal. The minister's guards fired several rounds in the air to disperse them.

Mobs also attacked the office of the Ganderbal district magistrate, damaging windows and furniture.

Violent protests were reported from Baramulla district in north Kashmir Baramulla, and south Kashmir's Anantnag and Pulwama districts too.

Authorities Friday suspended the Amarnath Yatra as roads both in the southern and northern routes were blocked by protesters.

At Khanyar in the old city, security forces had a tough time in controlling stone pelting mobs and residents alleged that many people were roughed up.

Security personnel had to use force to quell violent protests in many areas like Newshehra, Soura, Rainawari, Braripora, Rambagh, Tengpora, Noorbagh and Eidgah.

Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF) troopers opened fire at a mob at Rainawari in old city after Friday prayers, injuring two people. This led to considerable panic and tension in the area.

Chief Minister Ghulam Nabi Azad urged people to shun violence and assured them that "a solution to the problem would be worked out soon".

Kashmir Friday remained shut for the fifth consecutive day as businesses, educational institutions and banks could not function because of the violent demonstrations.

Kashmir Inspector General of Police S.M.Sahai said security forces have been directed to exercise maximum restraint while dealing with the situation.

The state cabinet March 5 allotted 40 hectares of forest land in Baltal of north Kashmir to the Shri Amarnath Shrine Board (SASB) for facilities of pilgrims.

Board chief executive Arun Kumar said the SASB would make concrete structures on the allotted land which now was under the board's proprietorship.

The state government rebutted his claim and said the land had not been allotted to the board but temporarily diverted to it without any authority to build permanent structures there.

Since then there has been an raging controversy that has snow-balled into major protests both in the Valley and the Jammu region over the issue which has assumed communal overtones.

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