

## Kashmir land row: Mob violence, protests enter sixth day

Protests against the controversial transfer of forest land to Shri Amarnath Shrine Board (SASB) entered the sixth day Saturday as demonstrators attacked a police station and torched vehicles in this summer capital of Jammu and Kashmir.

An irate mob resorted to heavy stone pelting outside the Police Control Room, adjacent to the Secretariat complex, at Batmaloo area in the city.

The police fired several shots in the air and used batons and tear smoke to disperse the protestors. Twelve people, including a police officer, were injured in the clash.

Another mob torched a Tata Sumo taxi and a private Maruti car, which had come out on the road during the protests in the area.

Yasin Malik, chairman of the Jammu and Kashmir Liberation Front (JKLF) who was leading a procession on Hari Singh High Street, 500 metres from the city centre Lal Chowk, was injured when the police and paramilitary Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF) intervened to disperse the protesters.

Malik has been taken to the Bone and Joint hospital here for treatment.

The state government March 5 allotted 40 hectares of forest land to the SASB that manages the annual pilgrimage to the Amarnath cave shrine in south Kashmir. The shrine houses a 'lingam' or a stalagmite structure, which is seen as an icon of Lord Shiva, one of the Hindu trinity.

Muslims in the Kashmir Valley are opposed to the allotment alleging the board would use the land to settle 'outsiders' in the area and thus change the region's demography.

The valley has witnessed unrelenting protests since Monday. Four people have been killed and scores injured in clashes with the police.

Also Saturday, protestors tried to torch the Zadibal Police Station in the old city area.

The police fired dozens of warning shots in the air besides tear smoke and used batons to bring the situation under control.

Another mob reached Lal Chowk and hoisted green flags on the clock tower there.

Protests continued in large parts of [Srinagar](#) including Maisuma, Barbarshah, Sonawar, Hyderpora, Rambagh, Rajouri Kadal, Bohri Kadal, Safa Kadal, Nawa Bazar, Soura and Nowshera.

At least a dozen police vehicles were damaged in the city.

A mob heavily stoned CRPF personnel at Chattabal area, three kilometres from Lal Chowk. Police fired to disperse the mob, injuring one person. The injured man was operated upon in a hospital.

Reports said more than 40 protestors and police personnel were injured at various places in the city.

Like Friday, educational institutions remained closed while work came to a standstill in banks and government offices. Traffic went off the roads.

Chief Minister Ghulam Nabi Azad summoned senior Congress ministers and legislators to discuss possible ways of defusing the highly surcharged law and order situation in the valley.

Reports from cities and towns of the valley also indicated a shutdown with groups of protestors blocking roads and obstructing traffic.

Meanwhile, around 4,000 pilgrims were Saturday allowed to proceed to the Amarnath shrine for the pilgrimage which started June 18. According to official figures a record number of 360,000 Hindus have visited the hill shrine.

Amid the violence, scenes of Hindu-Muslim amity were witnessed in Dalgate area of Srinagar Friday evening when some Muslims arranged food for the stranded Hindu pilgrims.

Hardline separatist leader Syed Ali Geelani has reiterated that the protests were not against the pilgrims but against the administration. He said the government had given communal overtones to a pilgrimage that had been going on for years with the active support of Kashmiri Muslims.

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