

Kashmir separatist leaders under house arrest

Kashmiri separatist leaders Syed Ali Geelani and Mirwaiz Umer Farooq were placed under house arrest here Friday to prevent them from organising a rally to celebration the cancellation of land allotment to the Amarnath shrine board.

The separatist Hurriyat Conference led by Farooq and its breakaway faction Tehreek-e-Hurriyat headed by Geelani had asked people to assemble at the Hazratbal shrine to offer what the separatists called thanksgiving prayers for the revocation of forest land allotment to the Shri Amarnath Shrine Board (SASB).

A large number of police and Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF) personnel were deployed near the Hazratbal shrine Friday to enforce law and order although no restrictions were imposed on movement of devotees.

The state government Tuesday cancelled its allotment of 40 hectares of forest land to the SASB, which organises an annual Hindu pilgrimage to the Amarnath cave shrine in south Kashmir.

The decision quietened the violent protests against the allotment in the Muslim-dominated Kashmir Valley. Five people were killed during the protests there last week, allegedly shot by the police.

But the revocation of the allotment order led to protests by Hindu groups in Jammu from Tuesday. Protesters clashed with security forces, resulting in police firing, baton charge and use of tear-gas.

The separatists have been calling the state government's decision to overturn the land allotment a 'great victory' for the Muslims who protested against the land being given to the shrine board.

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