

## Land row: 30 injured in Jammu violence

Violence flared up here Saturday and 30 people, including about a dozen policemen, were injured as protesters demanding allotment of a large plot of forest land in the Kashmir valley to the Shri Amarnath Shrine Board (SASB) started stone pelting and arson.

The city observed a complete shutdown for the third consecutive day Saturday as business, commercial establishments and educational institutes remained closed, and traffic was off the roads.

The violence erupted at several places in the city. An injured policeman was critical as a mob at Muthi, an outlying locality of Jammu, first threw stones and then caught hold of him and thrashed him, according to a police official.

The mob also set ablaze two vehicles and damaged several others. The protesters in the suburbs made several attempts to enter the city centre and the police teargassed and baton charged them to prevent them from doing so.

Protesters and the police fought pitched battles at Muthi, Diogiana, Bishnah and Vijaypur neighbourhoods and also within the walled city areas of Parade Ground, where effigies of National Conference president Omar Abdullah were burnt.

The violent protests over the Amarnath land row picked up after Kuldeep Kumar Dogra allegedly committed suicide Wednesday saying he was 'sacrificing his life for the cause' of Amarnath land return.

The protests had given way to black flag demonstrations and signature campaign for the re-allotment of the 40 acres of forest land in north Kashmir that was first allotted to the shrine board May 26 and then cancelled July 1.

The land was first allotted for raising temporary prefabricated structures for Amarnath pilgrims, who trek to reach a cave shrine in south Kashmir, housing a 'lingam' or a stalagmite structure, which is seen as an icon of Lord Shiva, one of the Hindu trinity.

The original allotment, at an altitude of 3,888 metres, was at the centre of the 10-day-long street protests in the Muslim-majority Kashmir Valley. The rescinding of the order July 1 quietened the valley protests but triggered off a counter agitation in the Hindu-dominated Jammu region.

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