

Curfew continues in Gorakhpur after fresh violence

Gorakhpur continued to simmer in communal tension and parts of the town remained curfew bound Tuesday as police presence was intensified after one person was shot dead the night before.

Schools, shops and commercial establishments were closed as in the eastern Uttar Pradesh town.

A scuffle between two individuals Saturday night accidentally led to a person in a Muharram procession being shot, snowballing into large-scale arson and disruption of normal life.

On Monday night, a youth was shot dead by unidentified miscreants when curfew was relaxed.

The state government effected several changes in the administration and flew in S.K. Bhagat, senior superintendent of police with the state's Special Task Force (STF), from Lucknow well after midnight to take command of the police force.

Besides, Rakesh Goel was rushed from Sitapur to take over as new district magistrate here.

The state government also ordered suspension of six local officials including district magistrate Hari Om and senior superintendent of police Raja Srivastava.

'They have all been suspended for dereliction of duty as they failed to contain the violence,' Principal Home Secretary Satish Kumar Agrawal told IANS.

According to Bhagat, the situation is now under control but no chances could be taken. 'We have to be extremely tough.'

He did not rule out the possibility of extending curfew to more areas of the city, where four of seven police circles were already under curfew. 'We will also have to be very strict about curfew relaxation as well.'

The trouble began Saturday night after two drunken youngsters clashed at a wedding party. A gunshot fired by one of them accidentally hit a person participating in a Muharram procession that was passing by.

While the person hit accidentally sustained minor injuries, the procession participants turned their ire against the marriage party and it soon turned into a free-for-all.

Later in the night, there were clashes between groups of the two communities. By the time the police got into action, much arson had taken place.

On Sunday, Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) MP Yogi Adityanath's arrest triggered fresh violence that surfaced again Monday with his followers coming out on streets hurling stones at policemen, attacking public and private property. They also torched two buses and a private car, besides shops and commercial establishments.

On Tuesday, two senior BJP leaders, Kesri Nath Tripathi and Lalji Tandon, were stopped when they were on their way to Gorakhpur.

The BJP threatened to launch a statewide agitation if the arrested party leaders were not released. It also accused the Mulayam Singh Yadav government of targeting BJP activists and leaders.

Bahujan Samaj Party chief Mayawati, a former chief minister, demanded a Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) inquiry into the violence.

(© IANS / India eNews)