

# Bandh paralyses life in Assam; 1 killed in firing

Hindustan Times Correspondent

GAUHATI, Nov. 19—The 36-hour Assam bandh brought normal life to a halt in the Brahmaputra Valley today. At least one person was killed in a firing on a violent mob at Dhing in Nowgong District.

A large number of persons arrested in different parts of the State on picketing and other charges.

Sponsored jointly by the All Assam Students Union (AASU) and the All Assam Gana Sangram Parishad (AAGSP) marking the beginning of a fresh phase of the agitation on the foreigners' issue, the bandh by and large affected the civil administration, banking, commercial activities, road transport and the railways (partially run with the help of the para-military personnel).

The Union Government's ban on strikes in public and private sectors in Assam, however, seemed to have prevented work stoppage in the oil fields in upper Assam and

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the Gauhati and Digboi refineries going. But the attendance in the communication units and other Central Government undertakings was virtually nil. No public telegram could be transmitted from the central telegraph office, Gauhati, and the telephone exchange at Pan Bazar lacked adequate hands.

Indian Airlines sources said the Calcutta-Gauhati and Gauhati-Delhi flights operated today and other services to Imphal, Dibrugarh and Jorhat were not affected.

Northeast Frontier Railway sources said two bombs were recovered between Gauhati and Kamakhya railway stations.

Sources close to the All Assam Students Union and the All Assam Gana Sangram Parishad (AAGSP) said the people had "spontaneously responded" to the bandh all over the Brahmaputra valley except in areas inhabited by the immigrants and the followers of the All Assam Minority Students Union which had opposed the agitation over the months.

Official reports on the Dhing incident said the police fired four rounds when a lathi-charge failed to disperse the mob. The situation

was described as tense but "well under control". Another report said the telephone exchange at Tinsukia industrial township was taken over by troops as the employees abstained from their posts.

The bandh was not observed in the Cachar District, certain rural areas of Nowgong, Karbi Anglong and North Cachar Hills Districts.

Chief Secretary Ramesh Chandra said that the overall situation in the State was peaceful till reports were received from the district headquarters at 2 p.m. He said the security arrangements were tightened following a bomb blast at Ulubari Agricultural Information Centre at 9.55 p.m. last night, besides the recovery of two bombs from the East and West cabin of the Maligaon Railway Station, the headquarters of the north-east frontier railway today.

The Chief Secretary said attendance in the Oil India installations in Upper Assam, Digboi and Gauhati oil refineries was normal and that the pumping of crude from the Oil India and Oil and Natural Gas Commission's wells in upper Assam by the Gauhati-Barauni pipeline was continuing without any interruption. Mr Chandra said while the attendance in the head-

quarters of the Northeast Frontier Railway at Maligaon was normal the Government employees attendance in Dibrugarh and Goalpara Districts was also "near normal".

A large number of shops opened at Dhubri but by and large the shops in Greater Gauhati Municipal Corporation areas remained closed since morning.

Mr Chandra said that Assam Road Transport Corporation ran long-distance services besides running some city buses in Gauhati.

The Gauhati refinery was shut down at midnight last night.

PTI, UNI and At Jorhat 80 to 70 shops in the market were open, Mr Ramesh Chandra said.

Train and air services were maintained and the Assam State Road Transport Corporation (ASRTC) operated several long distance bus services though with "reduced complement of passengers."

A skeleton city bus service was also operated by the ASRTC.

Mr Chandra said the Mairabari-Saparmukh passenger train was obstructed at a place near Dhing by a crowd of 2,000 people.

The magistrate on duty and police officers requested them to disperse, but the crowd did not relent and instead started throwing stones and other missiles injuring the magistrate and 13 policemen, he said.

AASU president Prafulla Kumar Mahanta tonight condemned the police firing at Dhing and alleged that the police resorted to firing on "peaceful and unarmed" people.

The AASU president expressed his "deep sorrow" at the death of Mr Dhruvajyoti Nath, the lone casualty in the firing.

He claimed that today's bandh was "peaceful and total."

Reacting to Union Home Minister Zail Singh's reported comment that good sense should prevail on the Assam agitation leaders, Mr Mahanta said that "the prevalence of good sense is not mutually exclusive."

The All Assam Tribal Students

20 NOV 1981  
HINDUSTAN TIMES

Union has also condemned the firing.

In a joint statement AASU president Durga Das Boro and assistant general secretary Anil Daimari alleged that the police fired on "peaceful picketers" and termed it as "barbarous."

The two leaders also demanded a judicial inquiry into the firing and immediate unconditional release of all the arrested persons.

AASU assistant general secretary Mr Bharat Narah said about 67 students were arrested in Gauhati alone.

## Nine students arrested

GAUHATI, Nov. 19 (UNI) — Nine students of veterinary college including AASU executive member Arun Kumar Sarma were today arrested from the college hostel at Khaparpara here, according to the college authority.

Meanwhile, four prominent businessmen of Gauhati were arrested last night under the Assam Maintenance of Public Order Act, official sources said.

Those arrested were Mr Sawalram Goenka, Mr Ram Niranjan Goenka, Mr Raj Chand Kothari and Mr Sawalram Didwania.

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