

# Life paralysed in Assam

GAUHATI, November 19  
(PTI & UNI).

ONE person was killed in police firing at Dhing railway station and industrial and commercial activity came to a near standstill as Assam began observing a 36-hour bandh from 5 a.m. today on the foreign nationals issue.

Official sources said the police fired four rounds after lathi-charge and bursting of tear-gas shells proved ineffective to disperse a 2,000-strong stone-throwing crowd, which tried to prevent steaming out of a local train.

A magistrate and 13 police personnel were injured in brickbatting. A magisterial inquiry has been ordered. Official sources said that an indefinite curfew was clamped in the town as a precautionary measure.

Except for this, no major incident was reported till late this evening.

The bandh, which will end at 5 p.m. tomorrow, marks the revival of the agitation by the All-Assam Students' Union (AASU) and the All-Assam Gana Sangram Parishad (AAGSP) on the foreign nationals issue.

The civil secretariat at Dispur and the N.F. Railway headquarters at Maligaon functioned normally with "fair" attendance of both gazetted and non-gazetted staff, the chief secretary to the Assam government, Mr. Ramesh Chandra said.

Normal life was disrupted in the state. While attendance in the deputy commissioners' offices was "fairly normal," there was only "thin attendance" in the other district offices in the Brahmaputra Valley, according to reports received here.

The bandh had "no effect" in the predominantly non-Assamese Cachar

district and the two tribal districts of North Cachar and Karbi Anglong as also in parts of Nowgong and Goalpara districts, the chief secretary said. In other districts of the state, it had only "marginal effect", he added.

Nearly 400 persons had been taken into preventive custody under section 15 Cr.P.C. throughout Assam as a preventive measure, he said.

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 Niranjana Goenka, Mr. Rai Chand Kothari and Mr. Sawalram Didwania.

Banking operations throughout the state were virtually at a standstill, education institutions were closed and private city and long distance buses off the road.

## REFINERY CLOSED

The state transport corporation authorities provided police escorts to maintain a skeleton service on both long and short-distance routes.

Train services to and from Assam were maintained, though on delayed timings while two combined Indian Airlines flights operated on the Dibrugarh-Jorhat-Gauhati-Calcutta route. The direct Delhi-Gauhati flight was unaffected.

The country's oldest refinery at Digboi was functioning normally, but the Gauhati refinery was closed as no one turned up for duty. The pumping of oil by Oil India Limited and the ONGC was going on uninterrupted and work in oil wells was satisfactory, a government spokesman said. Bongaigaon refinery also functioned normally.

However, post offices in most parts of the Brahmaputra Valley, were closed.

Troops, kept in readiness to help maintain essential services and, if necessary, law and order, were pressed into service to relieve the morning shifts in two telephone exchanges at Tezpur in Darrang district and Tinsukia in Dibrugarh district, official sources said.

Industrial and commercial activity came to a standstill with most factories and trading establishments remaining closed.

Two unexploded bombs recovered from the railway track near Kamakhya station here this morning leading to delayed running of trains.

A Dibrugarh report said there was no untoward incident.

## BOMBS FOUND

All shops, bazars were closed at Diphu, headquarters of Karbi, Anglong district, with volunteers of the district students' co-ordination committee, affiliated to the AASU enforcing the bandh.

According to Mr. Ramesh Chandra, shops, markets and the match factory were open at Dhurbri, head-

quarters of Goalpara district. The railway workshop at Dibrugarh and the Digboi oil refinery were functioning normally.

Work in tea gardens was also not affected, Mr. Chandra said.

An abortive attempt to block two trains near Jorhat and Betbari in Sibsagar district was made by pickets. But the pickets were removed and the trains allowed to proceed, according to police sources here.

The Assam government had taken strict security measures to maintain law and order and also warned employees of disciplinary action, including pay-cut, suspension or even arrest under the Essential Services Maintenance Act if they abstained from duty.

The Centre too yesterday had invoked the Essential Services Maintenance Act and banned strikes in a wide range of services.

The president of AASU, Mr. 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, in the Dhing firing.

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

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

He said that "display of strength" could not suppress the "mass movement" launched by the people of Assam.

The All-Assam Tribal Students' Union (AATSU) had also condemned the day's police firing.

In a joint statement, the AATSU president, Mr. Durga Das Boro, and the assistant general secretary, Mr. Anil Doimari, alleged that the police fired on "peaceful pickets" 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.

## 'Sabotage' in north-east causes power crisis

AGARTALA, November 19 (PTI): Major damage to two overhead towers near Jowai in Meghalaya, suspectedly sabotaged on November 17, has created serious power crises in Tripura, Mizoram, Cachar district of Assam and Garo Hills area of Meghalaya, according to official sources.

Cachar district and Mizoram were the worst hit. Construction work on the 150 Mw Kapili power project in Meghalaya, the sources said here today, was also being held up for want of power. The line would take at least a fortnight to restore, they added.

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