

Army out in Assam: 3 killed in firing

By Our Special Correspondent

GAUHATI, December 31.

THE army was called out and an indefinite curfew imposed today on Dimon town, 13 km. from Nowgong district in Assam. Reinforcements of security forces were rushed to the disturbed area following incidents of violence and police firing which claimed three lives and resulted in injuries to ten.

A magistrate on duty, a circle in-

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spector and 25 jawans of the CRP were injured in incidents of brickbat-throwing and armed attacks by some miscreants. One of the jawans received a wound from an arrow.

The 36-hour "rasta roko" (road blockade) programme in Assam which commenced at 5 a.m. turned violent at several places and was marked by acts of sabotage at some other places.

The "rasta roko" agitation, part of the second phase of the current agitation sponsored by the All-Assam Students' Union to press the Centre to accept their latest 17-point proposals as the basis for a solution of the foreign nationals problem, affected road communication in Nowgong dis-

trict, north Lakhimpur district and parts of Kamrup district. Elsewhere, the response was lukewarm or cold.

The road blockade programme will be supplemented by attempts to block the movement of train services throughout the state from 5 a.m. tomorrow.

According to Mr. Ramesh Chandra, Assam chief secretary, an armed mob attacked a mobile police party escorting a state government bus convoy near Dimon this afternoon. The mob hurled bricks and some miscreants in the crowd even attacked the policemen with bows and arrows. The police opened fire after having failed to disperse the crowd by lathi-charge and tear-gas shelling.

In view of the tension prevailing in the area curfew was imposed on Demow town as well as on the 80-km patch on both sides of the national highway between, Ebeija crossing and Ghahikargaon in Nowgong district at 4 p.m. today. Troops were standing by to come to the aid of the civil administration if the need arises.

Mr. Ramesh Chandra told PTI tonight that curfew would be in force between Babajia and Raha in an area covering 500 metres on either side of the national highway 37, including Dimon, as a precautionary measure.

The chief secretary said the trouble began at Dimon when a huge milling crowd put up a road blockade and resorted to heavy brickbattling on a convoy of two buses and three trucks moving with armed escorts from Jagiroad to Nowgong. A magistrate sustained head injury and a circle inspector of police and several CRPF jawans were injured in the brickbattling.

The police burst teargas shells and resorted to a lathi-charge to disperse the violent crowd. Later, the crowd swelled and threw bricks and stones

on the forces when the police fired killing three people at the site.

Tension prevailed in the area after the firing, Mr. Chandra said, adding that the road blockade was later removed and the situation brought under control.

Earlier, the same convoy was attacked by a stone-throwing mob at Phulaguri, near Dimon, but the police managed to disperse them after a lathi-charge, in which three people were injured. Several security personnel sustained injuries in the stone-throwing.

The chief secretary said two drivers and two helpers of two trucks were "taken away" by a group of people between Jakkhalabandha and Kalia Bor in Nowgong district. A police party rushed to the scene and found the abandoned trucks on the highway. A search was on to trace the missing people, he added.

Over 100 people were arrested in different places in the Brahmaputra valley today as a preventive measure. Another mob attacked a police party led by the superintendent of police on the outskirts of Nowgong town with bows and arrows resulting in injuries to 11 CRP jawans.

According to an official spokesman of the Assam government at Dispur, bomb explosions and attempts at sabotage were reported from some parts of the state.

A bomb exploded early this morning under a culvert at Maligaon on the outskirts of Gauhati. The damage was repaired and road communication restored. No one was injured in the explosion.

An unexploded bomb was recovered from the tanga bus terminus this morning. Another bomb was found planted under a culvert between Biduguri and Thakurkuchi railway stations in Darrang district.

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