Curfew imposed as violence, arson rock Bhaderwah after killing

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Troops deployed in Bhaderwah town on Thursday. —Excelsior/Tilak Raj

Army called out, stages flag march; situation tense

8 detained for midnight firing, Internet snapped

Sanjeev Pargal

JAMMU, May 16: Curfew was imposed and Army called out, which staged flag march in Bhaderwah town of Doda district after a man was killed under mysterious circumstances at Nalthi and another injured with gun shots following which youth from majority community targeted property of the minorities alleging that deceased, who was a cattle trader, was allegedly killed by the cow vigilantes.

Administration, however, said that they were investigating all angles behind the killing and nothing can be said when the probe was just at preliminary stage and was hampered by the people by indulging in violence and arson. **Click here to watch video**

The man, who was killed in firing by the miscreants at about 2 am at Nalthi area of Bhaderwah, has been identified as Naeem Shah, 52, and the injured as Yasir Khan, 40, both residents of Qila Mohalla.

Inspector General of Police (IGP), Jammu Zone, MK Sinha told the Excelsior that the people had expressed doubts of firing over three persons and all of them have been detained for questioning. Apart from them, five more suspects have been taken into custody and were being quizzed, he added.

“Our priority is to identify the killer first. Only then motive behind the killing would be known,” Sinha, who was monitoring tense situation in Bhaderwah, said, adding that both the persons had sustained pellet injuries.

Official reports said that three persons were riding on horses and moving in Nalthi area of Bhaderwah around 2 am when suddenly two bullets hit two of them, killing Shah instantly and causing splinter injuries in leg to another.

Hearing sound of gunshots, some people rushed to the spot and shifted body of Shah to Bhaderwah hospital at 2.30 am. The injured was also hospitalized.

At about 8 am today, youths from majority community went on rampage in Bhaderwah town alleging that Shah was a cattle trader and has been killed by the cow vigilantes and started pelting stones and torching the property of minorities including shops, houses and parked vehicles.

Mob also subjected Bhaderwah police station to heavy stone pelting, prompting authorities to retaliate with lathicharge.

Sources said number of shops and houses of minorities were damaged in stone pelting by

mob. They also set ablaze few vehicles. In the meantime, youth from minority community also retaliated and pelted stones on shops of majority community.

Sensing the situation going out of control with lathicharge and teargas having no impact on the protesters, Deputy Commissioner Doda Sagar Doifode and SSP Doda Shabir Ahmed Malik requisitioned the Army to take control of Bhaderwah town to quell the protests and maintain law and order.

Army moved out in the town around 9 am and the District Magistrate also announced imposition of indefinite curfew within the limits of Bhaderwah town. Authorities directed Telecom operators to snap mobile internet services in Bhaderwah and surroundings to prevent flare up of rumours.

Normalcy was restored in Bhaderwah town immediately after imposition of curfew and deployment of Army, which staged flag march in all vulnerable areas of the town to restore confidence among the people. However, despite curfew, situation remained tense with strong resentment brewing among the majority community against the killing of Shah and among minorities against extensive damage caused to the property of those, who had nothing to do with the killing.

“No untoward incident has been reported from any part of Bhaderwah town after imposition of curfew and deployment of Army,” SSP Doda Shabir Ahmed Malik told the Excelsior but said Army, CRPF and police were maintaining strict vigil over the situation to ensure that trouble doesn’t erupt again.

Malik said police was investigating all angles behind the killing and efforts were on to identify the killers. He added that two gun shots had been fired on the people at Nalthi in which Naeem Shah was killed and his colleague, Yasir Khan was injured.

Though Naeem Shah was a cattle trader, police declined to say that he was killed because of this. Presently, the killing is mysterious. Only when the real accused are identified and arrested, the motive behind the killing will be known, they said, adding that efforts were on in this direction.

Police said they have arrested a total of eight accused, all from minority community. Three of them were those on whom the people had expressed doubts of the killing while five others were also locals. They were being questioned.

Police have, meanwhile, registered two separate First Information Reports (FIRs) at Bhaderwah police station, one pertaining to the killing of Naeem Shah and injuries caused to Yasir Khan and another in the violence and arson.

This is for the third time in past six and half months that curfew was been imposed in Bhaderwah town of Doda district.

Curfew was imposed on November 2 last year following killings of BJP leader Anil Parihar and his brother Ajit Parihar in Kishtwar and again on April 9 after the killings of RSS leader Chanderkant Sharma and his PSO Rajinder Kumar also in Kishtwar. However, Bhaderwah town had remained peaceful with no violence from any part after the Kishtwar killings except protests by the minorities.

Meanwhile, Union Minister, Dr Jitendra Singh spoke to Governor Satya Pal Malik on telephone on the situation prevailing in Bhaderwah town and called for restraint instead of provocation.

“There was an unfortunate incident, following which curfew has been imposed. Time to exercise restraint instead of causing provocation. We are in constant touch with district and State administrations as well as police high-ups. Also spoke to Governor SP Malik,” Dr Jitendra Singh said in a tweet.

Leader of Opposition in Rajya Sabha and former Chief Minister of Jammu and Kashmir, Ghulam Nabi Azad expressed grief over the killing of a youth in Bhaderwah and called for bringing the accused to book and punishment to them under the law of land.

Azad said he spoke to the Deputy Commissioner of Kishtwar and demanded magisterial inquiry into the killing.

He appealed to the people to maintain peace, mutual trust and tranquility.

“Some miscreants will always try to spoil peaceful atmosphere and communal harmony of Bhaderwah town in particular and the Doda district in general. It is the responsibility of each one of us to ensure peace at every cost,” Azad said.

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