3 cops, 7 Forest officials injured in stone pelting by land grabbers

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Gopal Sharma

SDM's vehicle damaged by land grabbers in Raika area of Jammu during operation on Thursday. Another pic on page 6. -Excelsior/Rakesh

JAMMU, Feb 26: At least 10 Forest officials and policemen were injured and three vehicles and a JCB were extensively damaged when they were suddenly attacked by the land grabbers and their supporters after a joint team of Forest and Police departments assisted by SDM South and DFO Jammu, launched operation to clear at least 200 kanals of Forest land grabbed in Raika area near Sidhra hospital of Bahu Range today.

The team faced tough resistance from the locals of the area led by a Naib Sarpanch and the officials including SDM South Sajjad Mehmood, DFO Jammu Dr V S Senthil Kumar and Range Officer Ajit Chander got trapped in the stonning from all the sides. The police had to lob at least a dozen teargas shells to disperse the mob. The reinforcement was rushed to the site from the Bahu Fort police Station and DPL and the operation was moved ahead.

Three Forest officials including Tarsem Lal driver of the DFO, Raman Kumar watcher FPF and Sunil Singh driver of the JCB and three police men were hospitalised immediately. They were bleeding as the stones hit them on the head. The SDM, DFO and RO had narrow escape but the Duster vehicle No. JK02BA/5666 belonging to SDM and Bolero of the DFO Jammu, bearing registration No. JK02BB/9704, a Maruti car of Forester, a truck of Forest Department bearing No. JK02BC/4370 and a JCB of National Highway Authority of India were extensively damaged.

Reports said the joint team arrived at the site during mid day to demolish two structures and retrieve nearly 200 kanals Forest land grabbed by 3-4 families in Compartment No 66/B of Bahu Range. Initially there were 15-20 people including women at the site opposing the operation. But suddenly a mob of nearly 50-60 people with lathis and other weapons reached there.

They started heavy stone pelting on the Government officers and other team members engaged in clearing Government land. The officials ran away for the safety and left behind their vehicles. The members led by one Bagh Hussain, his sons Kaim Din and Kurshid Ali resorted to damaging the vehicles. The wind and rear screens, window panes and lights of the vehicles were damaged with stones, lathi and iron rods. Even the JCB was extensively damaged.

The Conservator of Forests Jammu East Circle, B M Sharma contacted SSP Jammu and the reinforcement was rushed to the site and the police resorted to lobbing tear gas shells on the violent mob. The officials again resumed the operation and smashed two pucca structures raised by the land grabbers on Forest land. The fencing raised by the locals was also removed.

DFO Jammu disclosed that Sarpanch Raika was involved in the planning and stonning on the team. He said this operation was successfully done this time as on earlier occasion also, these people had heavily stonned on the Forest/FPF and police team. He said an FIR has been lodged against the accused identified so far. They have been booked for rioting, attempt to murder, violence and other cases. The main persons, identified and booked are-Bagh Hussain, Kaim Din, Khursheed Ali, Sami Ullah, Ghulam Sarwar, Inayat Ullah, Jamat Ali, Aman Ullah, Hafizullah, Sher Khan, Aslam, son of Bagh Hussain, Sonu, son of Shah Mohd, Khurshid Ali, Sikender, Mian, Shabir and Samiulla.

The DFO said that two more structures were demolished from Forest land at Upper Roop Nagar by Ranger B S Sanyal and another pucca structure at Sunjwan in Khsara No. 371 today.

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