

Pro-reservation protests turn violent in Patna

Patna, May 19: Thirty five people, including four mediamen and some policemen, were injured in a clash here today between police and pro-quota agitators who also targeted members of the press with sticks and lathis. Chief Minister Nitish Kumar has ordered a probe into the incident by a DGP.

Shouting slogans against those opposing the Union Human Resource Ministry's proposal to introduce reservations for OBCs, hundreds of pro-quota medical students and junior doctors took out a procession from Gandhi Maidan. On reaching the busy Dak Bunglow roundabout, they burnt effigies of anti-quota protestors.

Without any provocation, they then turned violent and attacked photo-journalists and cameramen covering the agitation with sticks, lathis and other objects.

Photographers of the Press Trust of India, Times of India and Hindustan Times, cameramen of Star News and Aaj Tak TV channels and some journalists were injured in the attack. A couple of lensmen suffered head injuries and were sent to the Patna Medical College Hospital for treatment.

The pro-quota students also attacked policemen with sticks, forcing them to resort to a heavy baton-charge in which over 20 protestors were injured, officials said.

Policemen were seen mercilessly beating the students, who scurried for cover on Frazer Road, eyewitnesses claimed.

In all, around 35 people including students, mediamen and police personnel were injured in the clashes, a senior police official said.

Senior Superintendent of Police Kundan Krishnan told reporters that apart from the cameramen and journalists, the protestors also attacked policemen, injuring four of them.

Chief Minister Nitish Kumar asked Director General of Police Ashish Ranjan Sinha to get the entire incident looked into and to submit a report to him.

A student leader, pleading anonymity, said 20 of his colleagues were injured in the lathicharge.

"We suspected that some anti-social elements mixed with the pro-quota supporters and perpetrated the violence," Krishnan said.

Vehicular traffic near the Dak Bunglow roundabout was disrupted for over two hours due to the clashes. The traffic resumed after anti-riot vehicles and police personnel were rushed from the city control room.

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