

31 July 2014

By Piyush Srivastava in Saharanpur. Mail Today

CERTAIN aspects of the Saharanpur clashes indicate meticulous planning by the rioters who had a singular agenda of dividing the Sikhs and Muslims in the western Uttar Pradesh district. IG, Meerut Zone, Alok Sharma confirmed that the clashes were pre-planned. "The riot was preplanned.

The way the firing was done and shops were burnt indicate many possibilities... We are investigating all angles," he said. The role of the civil and police administration is also under the scanner as the armed rioters had a free hand for nine hours till 4 pm on Saturday before the lathi-wielding policemen dispersed the mob.

ADG, Telecom, Devendra Singh Chauhan admitted that the local administration could have prevented the riots if decisions were taken promptly. "The district magistrate and the senior superintendent of police are expected to take prompt decisions in such situation.

The violence could have been averted if action was initiated at the proper time," Chauhan, who has been sent to Saharanpur as special observer, said.

The ADG said the rioters have been identified and police teams have been constituted to arrest them. The culprits will be booked under the stringent National Security Act, Chauhan added.

The rioters had a well-chalked plan as they first set ablaze the firebrigade office and fire tenders, crippling the department from carrying out any relief work. They then carried out looting and arson at the Ambala Road.

"Some rioters were lighting Molotov cocktails and throwing them inside the shops. Despite repeated requests to impose curfew in the the police kept saying till 4 pm that they didn't receive any order stop the people from gathering.

Over 4,000 people had assembled Ambala Road by 10 am. They were increasingly getting violent," cloth trader Harvinder Singh, whose shop was torched, claimed.

Interestingly, the disputed plot never a major issue for the two communities until recently. The Sikhs claimed the Muslims had claimed their rights over the plot after they bought it four years

ago.

Though the Muslims claimed that plot was a Waqf property, they could not prove the same in a minority commission.

Later, they had withdrawn their claim over the plot and it was finally handed over to the Sikhs. Since then, it was a non-issue for the two communities. The construction work was started there a year ago without any opposition from the other side, the Sikh community claimed. But all of a sudden, some people objected to the construction by Sri Guru Singh Sabha and violence erupted on Saturday.

Locals also claimed that some motorcycle-borne masked men were indiscriminately firing at whosoever standing on their way, suggesting that they wanted to spread terror among the people for stopping construction at the plot.

“ We saw two masked men on a motorcycle who were firing at the passers-by in Ghantaghar area,” Sanjeev Bhandari, whose shop was set on fire at Ambala Road, said.

Prior to the clashes on Saturday, Saharanpur had last witnessed communal violence in December 1992 when the Babri Masjid was demolished in Ayodhya.

<http://communalism.blogspot.in/2014/07/india-up-saharanpur-clashes-indicate.html>