

India's Manipur violence: 60 killed, 1700 houses burnt

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Online Desk: The death toll in ethnic rioting in the north-eastern Indian state of Manipur has been officially pegged at 60 and the number of injured at 231, while 1,700 houses including religious sites were burnt in the past few days.

The figures were put out by Manipur Chief Minister N Biren Singh at a press conference in Imphal yesterday. This was the first time that casualties were officially acknowledged in the violence between May 3 and 5, reports our New Delhi correspondent. "In the wake of the unfortunate incident that took place in Manipur, more than 20,000 people who were left stranded in relief camps have been moved to safety till today. Another 10,000 stranded people will be transported to safety as soon as possible," Singh said.

The chief minister said 1,041 guns were looted from security force personnel, out of which 214 have been recovered. He asked those who looted the guns to return those to the nearest police station, failing which a "mass combing operation" will be launched. The situation in Manipur is fast returning to normal, says Kuldeep Singh, security adviser to the chief minister. He told reporters that 218 FIRs were registered against miscreants involved in the rioting.

Violent clashes broke out in the northeastern state after a "Tribal Solidarity March" was organised in the 10 hill districts on May 3 to protest against the Meitei community's demand for Scheduled Tribe (ST) status. Meiteis account for about 53 per cent of Manipur's population and live mostly in the Imphal valley. Tribals — Nagas and Kukis — constitute another 40 percent of the population and live in the hill districts.