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Protest over wage hike turns violent

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A workers' protest demanding higher wages turned violent across industrial hubs of Noida on Monday, triggering widespread arson, stone pelting and vandalism, while bringing traffic to a standstill along key routesconnecting the city to Delhi during peak morning hours.

The agitation, which began around 9.30 am in Sector 62, quickly spread to multiple locations including the Phase-2 industrial area, Sectors 60, 63, 84 and the Chilla border. Thousands of workers from various factory units gathered on the roads, raising slogans and blocking arterial routes such as National Highway 9, a crucial corridor linking Delhi with western Uttar Pradesh. Over 200 people were detained in the protests, the police said.

Factory workers during a protest demanding a hike in wages, in Noida, Gautam Buddh Nagar district, Uttar Pradesh. — PTI

As the protests intensified, sections of demonstrators torched vehicles, including police vehicles, damaged public property and pelted stones. Thepolice said the situation escalated in pockets of Phase 2, where vehicles were set ablaze and a police vehicle was vandalised. Teargas and mild force were used at some locations to disperse the crowds.

The unrest paralysed traffic across Noida and at Delhi's entry points, leaving thousands of commuters stranded for hours. Long queues of vehicles stretched for kilometres at the Chilla border, DND flyway and along NH-9. Office-goers, students and even ambulances were caught in the gridlock.

According to officials, the protest was driven by long-pending demands forwage revision, with workers seeking parity with neighbouring Haryana, whereminimum wages were recently increased. Protesters alleged low salaries,non-payment of overtime and poor working conditions.