

Probe ordered into AP killings

HYDERABAD, August 9 (PTI):

The Andhra Pradesh chief minister, Mr N. Janardhan Reddy, today ordered a judicial probe into the incident in Chundur village of Guntur district on August 5, in which 20 Harijans were feared killed following a group clash.

So far, eight bodies have been recovered from a canal in the tension-gripped village. Search operations are still on. Divers had been brought from Kakinada for the purpose.

The chief minister, who rushed to the village by a helicopter, immediately after arriving from New Delhi, said a judge would soon be appointed to probe the incident.

Twenty persons had been arrested in connection with the clash, Mr Reddy said, and warned absconders that their property would be seized and auctioned if they did not surrender within three days.

Two police officials, including a circle inspector, had been suspended for showing "lenience" to one group, he added.

According to a report from Tenali, life was paralysed in the town today following a total bandh observed in protest against the killings.

Though no untoward incident had been reported so far, the situation in Chundur village was tense with several families confined to their homes.

The chief minister, who visited the hospital where the injured had been admitted, assured them that stern action would be taken against the culprits. He also promised full protection and adequate relief to the victims.

Meanwhile, the National Front chairperson, Mr N. T. Rama Rao, visited the affected village.