

## **Brief Report on Hyderabad blasts: 25 August 2007**

### **The incident:**

On 25 August 2007, India witnessed a significant terrorist attack in Hyderabad, the capital city of the southern state of Andhra Pradesh. Twin explosions occurred within minutes of each other at Lumbini Park, a crowded entertainment centre and at Gokul Chhat Bhandar, a popular eatery in Kothi district. To date, 44 people have been estimated dead and 60 injured.<sup>1</sup> The casualties include Hindus, Muslims and others.

The bombs used were Neo Gel-90, the Ammonium Nitrate emulsifier-based explosive which was triggered by clocks. Iron metal balls, easily available in any spare parts shop, were packed into the device for maximum impact. The bombs were wrapped in gift paper and placed inside rucksacks to avoid detection.<sup>2</sup> The materials used for making the bombs-explosive ammonium nitrate, cycle ball bearings, iron nails, 9 volt batteries and wooden boxes could have been procured locally and could have cost just Rs.2000.<sup>3</sup> The manufacture and distribution of this Class II explosive- Neo Gel-90, has increased after the ban imposed by the Indian government on its possession, sale and use three years ago. Police forces believe that at least 73 facilities across the country are still manufacturing such explosives after the ban.<sup>4</sup>

Police forces in Hyderabad have recovered 19 unexploded bombs since the blasts on 25 August 2007, which implies the potential magnitude of the attack if all the bombs had exploded. The bombs fitted with electronic timers were discovered at bus stops, cinemas and other public places.<sup>5</sup>

**Location of Hyderabad in Andhra Pradesh, India is given in the map below:<sup>6</sup>**



<sup>1</sup> "Terror scars South, will Govt. wake up to it?", <http://www.ibnlive.com/news/terror-scars-south-will-government-wake-up-to-it/47505-3.html>, accessed on 27/08/2007.

<sup>2</sup> "Bombs in IT hub disguised as gifts", *The Straits Times*, 29/08/2007, p. 11

<sup>3</sup> "Bombs cost Rs.2000", 29/08/2007,

<http://www.thestatesman.net/page.news.php?clid=2&theme=&usrsess=1&id=167958>.

<sup>4</sup> "Probe points to Lashkar's hand", *The Hindu*, 29/08/2007,

<http://www.hindu.com/2007/08/29/stories/2007082957280100.htm>.

<sup>5</sup> "Bombers planned wave of blasts", *The Straits Times*, 27/08/2007.

<sup>6</sup> Picture from [http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/south\\_asia/2500885.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/south_asia/2500885.stm), accessed on 28/08/2007.

Pictures from the blast site at the laser show in Lumbini Park and below, Gokul Chaat Bhandar, Hyderabad:<sup>7</sup>



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<sup>7</sup> Pictures from [www.ibnlive.com](http://www.ibnlive.com), [www.ndtv.com](http://www.ndtv.com), accessed on 28/08/2007.

## Who may be responsible?

The Harkat-ul-Jihad-e-Islami Bangladesh (HuJI-B) and Lashkar-e-Toiba (LeT) have been named as two possible suspects in the current bombings. HuJI-B is a terrorist group formed in 1992 in Dhaka, Bangladesh and aims to establish Islamic rule in Bangladesh. On the other hand, the Lashkar-e-Toiba (LeT) formed in 1990 in Afghanistan aims to impose Islamic rule in all parts of India.

The twin blasts have occurred in the wake of the Mecca Masjid bombing in Hyderabad (in May 2007), whose architect, Mohammad Abdul Shahid, alias Bilal is being implicated for 25 August blasts as well.<sup>8</sup> There is also concern that HuJI may have utilized the sleeper cells of Jaish-e-Mohammed (an Islamic extremist group founded by Masood Azhar in early 2000) as both groups follow the Deobandi sect of Islam.<sup>9</sup> The most recent reports indicate that an Assamese man is being held with regard to the Hyderabad blasts. He is suspected to be a Bangladeshi migrant with possible links to HuJI-B. In view of this latest development, there is renewed interest to locate the presence of HuJI-B in Assam and the other bordering states of Bangladesh.<sup>10</sup> Also, a Bangladeshi national and HuJI supporter identified as Mohammad Sharifuddin is believed to have assembled the bombs used in the Hyderabad terrorist attack on 25 August 2007.

It is believed that, days before the Hyderabad bomb attacks on 25 August 2007, the Intelligence Bureau of India had warned top-level police officials in Andhra Pradesh, and particularly Hyderabad, of an imminent terrorist strikes in the city.<sup>11</sup> Still, the state government, fearful of sanctioning standard emergency-response procedures which could have ignited communal tension in Hyderabad, did not take any action.<sup>12</sup>

## Possible implications:

The city of Hyderabad in Andhra Pradesh, self-styled as Cyberabad rivals Bangalore, the capital of neighboring Karnataka in attracting Information Technology (IT) software, pharmaceuticals and services- outsourcing investments. It is home to companies like Dr.Reddy's Laboratory, the country's largest drugs group by sales and Satyam Computers, India's fourth largest computer software exporter.<sup>13</sup> Also, as part of the ex-Chief Minister Chandrababu Naidu's Vision 2020 program, a state-of-the-art IT hub called the Hyderabad Information Technology Engineering Consultancy City has been

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<sup>8</sup> "HuJI imprint, but no fix yet, bomb had blasting gel, steel balls for deadly effect", *The Indian Express*, 27/08/2007, <http://www.indianexpress.com/story/212872.html>.

<sup>9</sup> "HuJI man key suspect in Hyderabad blasts", *Express India*, 27/08/2007, <http://www.expressindia.com/fullstory.php?newsid=91385>

<sup>10</sup> "Hyderabad blasts: Hunt on, 1 more held", *Times of India*, 29/08/2007, [http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/Hyderabad\\_blasts\\_Hunt\\_on\\_1\\_more\\_held/articleshow/2318096.cms](http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/Hyderabad_blasts_Hunt_on_1_more_held/articleshow/2318096.cms)

<sup>11</sup> "Intelligence warning on terror plot failed to spark police action", *The Hindu*, 29/08/2007, <http://www.hindu.com/2007/08/29/stories/2007082961421400.htm>

<sup>12</sup> "Intelligence warning on terror plot failed to spark police action", *The Hindu*, 29/08/2007, <http://www.hindu.com/2007/08/29/stories/2007082961421400.htm>

<sup>13</sup> "Hyderabad police find 19 devices after blasts kill 40", *Financial Times*, 27/08/2007.

developed since 1998. This hosts the offices of software giants like Microsoft, Oracle and Dell among others.<sup>14</sup> The development of the IT industry in Andhra Pradesh, driven by Hyderabad, is reflected in the rise in IT exports from 3 billion USD to 4.5 billion USD, from 2006 to 2007.<sup>15</sup> With the increasing threat to urban centers in India, it cannot be disregarded that economic and business centers in Hyderabad can be potential targets of terrorist attacks. There have been reports that after the Hyderabad blasts on 25 August 2007, companies like Satyam have stepped up security in its offices. Simultaneously these companies are also attempting to take a proactive stance to placate its client and customer base in the city. However, there is no evidence as yet as to the claim that the terrorist attacks on 25 August 2007 were specifically targeted at Hyderabad's burgeoning IT and other business industries.

Yet another significant factor about Hyderabad is the number of Muslims in the city which is three times the national average. Muslims in Hyderabad comprises of 40% of the population. Right from the independence of India in 1947 and the annexation of the princely states to the newly-born Indian nation, the city has historically experienced occasional instances of communal disharmony and violence. The targeting of Hyderabad by terrorist groups may be an attempt to instigate communal disharmony between Hindus and Muslims and undermine the secular nature of the Indian state. The religious slant to the Hyderabad blasts can also be linked to the recent video produced by Al Qaeda in August 2007 which warns of impending attacks on India and calls on the Muslims to mobilize against the Indian state.

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<sup>14</sup> "Hyderabad goes high-tech", [http://www.hydonline.com/business/ithyd/high\\_tech.htm](http://www.hydonline.com/business/ithyd/high_tech.htm), accessed on 28/08/2007.

<sup>15</sup> "Bombs in IT hub disguised as gifts", *The Straits Times*, 29/08/2007, p. 11