

The Hindu 8 March 2006

Bomb blasts rock Varanasi, 21 killed (PTI & UNI)

Varanasi: Three bomb explosions ripped through this holy city, killing at least 21 persons and injuring 62 others at a crowded temple and a railway station. The police found two other bombs near the city's main cremation site on the banks of the Ganga. Immediately after the blasts, the police were put on high alert in several parts of the country and security was stepped up at places of worship, vital installations and government buildings. The first blast took place inside the Sankat Mochan temple adjacent to the Kashi Vishwanath temple... Minutes later, another bomb went off in the holding area of platform one of the Cantonment railway station. The third blast occurred in a crowded coach of the Shiv Ganga Express just before it was to leave for New Delhi...

The Hindu 8 March 2006

Intensive hunt on for bombers (Praveen Swami)

New Delhi: Police forces in five States, as well as the Intelligence Bureau, have begun investigating the worst terrorist attack in India since the Mumbai bombings of 2003. Informed sources said authorities in Jammu and Kashmir, Andhra Pradesh, Maharashtra, Gujarat, and Delhi, all of which have seen terrorist attacks in recent months, have been asked to share intelligence on the pan-India terror networks that executed the Varanasi bombings. With little hard intel ligence on their hands so far, the principal organisations on investigators' check-lists will most likely be the organisation responsible for most recent terror strikes, - Lashkar-e-Taiba. In May 2005, the Uttar Pradesh Police unearthed evidence that a major Lashkar recruitment targeting seminary students was underway in the State, after two terrorists from Bihar and Jharkhand were arrested in Lucknow... Lashkar operatives, however, aren't the only terrorist cadre to have created networks in Uttar Pradesh...

Hindustan Times 8 March 2006

Hours after blasts, 3 LeT men gunned down (Press Trust of India)

Lucknow, March 8: Hours after the blasts in Varanasi, a suspected Lashkar-e-Taiba terrorist was shot dead in an encounter with the police in Gosaiganj area on the outskirts of the city early on Wednesday morning. Police identified the terrorist as Salar alias Doctor and did not rule out his involvement in Tuesday's blasts at the Sankat Mochan Temple and Cantonment Railway Station in Varanasi, which claimed at least 28 lives. RDX and some detonators were from his possession after the encounter with the Special Task Force (STF), police sources said. Sources said that Salar was on his way to Lucknow when he was shot dead by the STF in an encounter... Earlier, in the wee hours of Wednesday morning, two other suspected Lashkar-e-Taiba terrorists were killed in an encounter in Northwest Delhi, police said...

The Indian Express 9 March 2006

Khalistan ideologue in police net (Harpreet Bajwa & Dharmendra Rataul)

Chandigarh/Amritsar, March 8: Nine months after he was booked on charges of sedition, Khalistan ideologue Jagjit Singh Chohan was finally nabbed today by the Punjab Police who apprehended him at the charitable hospital he owns in Tanda, Hoshiarpur. Chohan is also wanted in two other cases of sedition registered against him last year... The self-styled president of Khalistan, Chohan spent several years in the UK before returning to India in June 2001 ...

The Indian Express 10 March 2006

CCS told: Lashkar prime suspect, may have used Bangla operatives for blasts

New Delhi, March 9: The Cabinet Committee on Security (CCS) was told tonight that the Pakistan-based Lashkar-e-Toiba militant outfit was the prime suspect in the Varanasi blasts and had most probably used operatives from Bangladesh and local elements to carry out the bombings. The status report presented to the CCS pointed out that the evidence collected so far indicated that LeT was the mastermind behind the blasts though LeT men were not on the ground to personally set off the bombs. For that, the LeT is believed to have used Bangladeshis living illegally in Uttar Pradesh... The LeT modus operandi in Varanasi was similar to the Delhi blasts in October last year... Hours after Lashkar -e-Qahaar's claim for the Varanasi blasts, J-K Police said no such organisation existed and it was an attempt to mislead security agencies. "Lashkar-e-Qahaar is a non-existent outfit. We have inputs that Lashkar-e-Toiba is involved in these blasts,"...

The Indian Express 11 March 2006

Blast: 2 detained, police say they match sketches

Lucknow/Varanasi, March 10: Hardoi police today detained two persons, whose faces resembled the sketches of suspects behind the Varanasi blasts. They were later quizzed by a team of the Special Task Force of the UP Police and taken to an undisclosed location in Lucknow for further interrogation. Hardoi Superintendent of Police Kashinath Singh said, "The faces of these two people, Mohammed Ansar and Sadiq, matched almost exactly with those of the bombers whose portraits were released yesterday in Varanasi. Hardoi police say that the two belong to Muzzafarpur in Bihar but had been staying in a Hardoi guest house on false names and addresses for a week now... Today, the Uttar Pradesh Police also decided to set up an anti-terrorist cell in the force even as state DGP Yashpal Singh announced a reward of Rs 1 lakh for providing important clues about the Varanasi blasts..."

The Hindu 11 March 2006

Strong pointers to Lashkar's hand, says U.P. police chief (Vinay Kumar)

VARANASI: Uttar Pradesh Director-General of Police Yashpal Singh on Friday said the terrorist outfit, Lashkar-e-Taiba, was behind the March 7 explosions here, in which 20 persons were killed and 125 injured. The explosives used, the modus operandi, the timing of the blasts for pre-festival days and the choice of crowded places strongly pointed to involvement of the Lashkar. There were striking similarities between the Varanasi incident and the October 2005 blasts in Delhi. The same group could well be behind Tuesday's blasts... On the claim by the Lashkar-e-Qahar that it masterminded the blasts, he said it could well be a strategy to divert the attention of the investigating agencies. The security and intelligence agencies had not yet confirmed the existence of any terrorist outfit by that name. The Special Task Force (STF) of the Uttar Pradesh police was in touch with the police of 10 States in tracking down leads...

The Hindu 13 March 2006

Major terrorist strike averted in Mumbai

Mumbai: A day before the 13th anniversary of the Mumbai serial bomb blasts, a major terrorist strike in the city was averted with the timely detection of two kilos of explosive ammonium nitrate from the Byculla railway station in Central Mumbai. Apart from the explosive filled in a plastic water bottle, the police recovered a pocket-size transformer that could have provided the power if a detonator was to be attached to the device, Police Commissioner A.N. Roy told reporters here on Saturday... "A high alert has been sounded in the city and security tightened at all places of worship, railway stations and vital installations," Mr. Roy said...

The Hindu 12 March 2006

Suspected militant arrested in Goa

Panaji: A suspected militant, Tariq Ahmad Battlo, allegedly belonging to the Muzaffarabad-based Tehrik-ul-Mujahideen, an offshoot of the Lashkar-e-Taiba, was arrested by the Goa police at the Margao railway station on Friday evening. The arrest lent credence to the repeated warnings by Central intelligence agencies that Goa could be a potential target of terrorists. Preliminary interrogation of the 28-year-old youth from Srinagar revealed that the Pakistan-based outfit could have been planning strikes at some of the tourist spots, police sources said. They said Tariq could just be a carrier of explosives and the real mastermind behind the potential "Goa operation" could be still at large...

The Hindu 13 March 2006

Witnesses fail to identify Varanasi blast suspects; Lashkar-e-Taiba denies involvement in blasts (PTI & UNI)

Varanasi/Lucknow/Hardoi: Witnesses failed to identify the two suspects detained in Hardoi in connection with the Varanasi blasts. The witnesses to the blasts at the Sankat Mochan temple and the Cantonment railway station could not identify Sadiq Ali and Ansar, whose faces resembled the released sketches of the militants suspected to be behind the explosions, official sources said. Ali and Ansar were paraded a number of times before the witnesses at a hotel in the temple town on Saturday, the sources said. The eyewitnesses said they were not the same persons who had kept a bag containing the bomb at the Godaulia market on March 7... Confusion prevailed over whether they have been released, with Uttar Pradesh Home Secretary Alok Sinha and the Hardoi police taking contrasting positions... A report from Srinagar said the militant outfit Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT) on Saturday denied its involvement in the blasts. The LeT said it had no connection with those arrested in Uttar Pradesh and Goa.

The Hindu 13 March 2006

'Mormugao major militant target'

Panaji: Major Central Government establishments situated in the port town of Mormugao in South Goa, including the Mormugao port, the Dabolim airport, the railway station and IOC oil tanks were some of the potential targets of attacks on the list of a suspected militant of the Tehrik-ul-Mujahiddin, now in police custody. Briefing journalists, Director-General of Police Neeraj Kumar said it was clear that Tariq Jalal working for the Pakistan-based terrorist group was in the process of setting up a base in the State. All through his eight-month stay in the State, he received funds from Pakistan through the hawala route. The interrogation process gained momentum on Sunday as teams from two Central investigation agencies arrived in the State and joined the Goa police. Jalal was remanded to police custody for 14 days by a court in South Goa on Saturday. While the DGP denied that Jalal had mentioned any of the tourism establishments on the list of his target, police sources did not rule out plans to attack hotels and other places frequented by foreigners... Jalal gave an elaborate account of his two-year training in Muzaffarabad, during which he travelled extensively through Bangladesh and Nepal. He also gave details of his training on jihad in militant camps...

The Indian Express 14 March 2006

Delhi to bring up terror issue with Khaleda, Karzai (Pranab Dhal Samanta)

New Delhi, March 13: Fresh from the Varanasi terror attack, a concerned India is looking forward to two key visits

in the next few weeks -Bangladesh Prime Minister Khaleda Zia and Afghan President Hamid Karzai. India will discuss its concerns over Bangladesh links that have emerged in investigations into some of the recent attacks like Ayodhya and Varanasi when Zia reaches here on March 20. But sources made it clear that New Delhi will raise the matter more in the sense of forging greater cooperation to deal with the issue as indications are that Bangladesh is used as a transit in a larger terror network. Dhaka too has been facing enormous problems dealing with terror. There have been attacks and blasts in Bangladesh and the feeling is that there could be better results if the two countries cooperate in the long run. Karzai's problems with Pakistan and its growing involvement in pushing terrorist activities in Afghan territory have further underlined the need to intensify cooperation with India...

The Indian Express 17 March 2006

IISc attack trail leads to Hyderabad man now in Pakistan (Jhonsonta)

Bangalore, March 16: Investigations into the December 28 terror attack at the Indian Institute Of Science (IISc) have narrowed down to Shahid, a Hyderabad native based in Bangladesh and now reportedly hiding in Pakistan. He carried out the attack either himself or through an associate, investigations in the case have revealed. The Bangalore police have zeroed in on Shahid as their prime suspect in the attack that killed a retired IIT, Delhi professor, on the basis of information revealed by terror suspects nabbed in different parts of the country, tapped telephone conversations and some of the evidence found at the IISc after the attack. The IISc attack is now being seen as a Lashkar-e-Toiba-funded operation controlled by the group's pan-India operations head, the Pakistan-based Muzammil and executed by Shahid-who is known to be a Jaish-e-Mohammed operative...

The Hindustan Times 17 March 2006

Four terrorists killed in shoot-out; 5 cops hurt in Ahmedabad (Press Trust of India)

Ahmedabad, March 17, 2006: Four terrorists, including two Pakistani nationals, were shot dead in a police encounter in Vatva locality of the city in the wee hours on Friday. The incident took place when a team of police officials raided a house near Vinzol railway station before the break of dawn. When asked to open the door of the house, the terrorists opened fire from inside and in the ensuing gun battle the four terrorists were killed, police said. Five policemen were also injured in the cross firing, they said. Police recovered four pistols, ammunition, equipment to make detonators and a plastic bag containing explosives, which had the words 'Mission Kashmir' written on it...

The Indian Express 18 March 2006

Death of 4 Harkat men shows terror trail from J&K to Gujarat (Muzamil Jaleel)

Srinagar, March 17: Hours after four militants were killed in a pre-dawn raid on the outskirts of Ahmedabad, the J&K Police say they have identified three of them from the pictures sent by the Gujarat Police. The Gujarat Police said in the morning that they were suspected to be Harkat-ul-Mujahideen militants and said their objective seemed to have been to "establish a terror network and target VVIPs, public and religious places". The militants had travelled to Ahmedabad from Shopian- a militant hotbed in Pulwama district of south Kashmir. One of them is a Pakistani militant commander, Azaan, who had been operating in south Kashmir as deputy chief of Harkat-ul-Mujahideen while two are local recruits of the outfit from Shopian...

The Hindustan Times 18 March 2006

Bangalore terror trail leads to Bangladesh (Rashmi Saksena)

Hyderabad, March 18, 2006: Investigators probing the December 28 attack on the Institute of Science in Bangalore have zeroed in on one Shahid, who either carried out the attack himself or had it executed by an associate. And his pursuit has given the police proof of what they've suspected for some time now - that terrorist groups are recruiting youth with working knowledge of computers from Hyderabad and other places in the state and sending them to Bangladesh and Pakistan for jihad...

Daily Excelsior 19 March 2006

Ultra killed in Gujarat was HuM chief (PTI)

Ahmedabad, March 18: One of the four terrorists killed in an encounter here was a Pakistani and "chief commander" of Harkat-ul-Mujahideen militant outfit in Jammu and Kashmir, a senior police official said today. The terrorist, killed in yesterday's encounter, has been as identified as a Pakistani national Azaan, Assistant Commissioner of Police G L Singhal said. Azaan was the "most-wanted" militant in Kashmir and was involved in numerous terrorist activities in the State, Singhal said, adding two others were identified as Mohammed Javed and Mohammed Ayub, both Kashmiris. Their identities were confirmed by the Jammu and Kashmir police, he said... He said it was the first time that a Harkat-ul-Mujahideen militant were found operating in Gujarat. This group have modules in Maharashtra and Bangalore, but this is the first known attempt of the group to set up a local network in Gujarat, Singhal said, adding terrorists were scouting potential recruits to carry out disruptive activities in the city and target VVIPs. Officials are also trying to infer the contents of the 'jehadi' literature (written in Urdu) recovered from the house...

The Hindu 21 March 2006

Babbar Khalsa militants captured in Delhi

New Delhi: Paramjeet Singh Bheora, alleged head of operations of Babbar Khalsa International in India, and two of his accomplices who were planning to set up base here in the Capital have been arrested by the Special Cell of the Delhi police. According to the police, a huge quantity of arms and ammunition has been recovered from them. Paramjeet was allegedly involved in the assassination of Punjab Chief Minister Beant Singh in 1995... Mr. Karnal Singh said Paramjeet and his accomplices had come to Delhi to meet a contact who was to provide them a hideout as well as a vehicle. Further, Paramjeet was to go to Moradabad in Uttar Pradesh to meet another link, while Jasbir and Bhupinder were to go to Rajasthan to collect a huge consignment of arms and ammunition sent by BKI chief Wadhawa Singh who is now based in Pakistan. The police said Pakistan's Inter-Services Intelligence was helping these militants...

The Hindu 22 March 2006

Delhi, Dhaka to fight terrorism (Amit Baruah)

New Delhi: India and Bangladesh, being "victims" of terrorism, should join hands to fight the menace, Prime Ministers Manmohan Singh and Khaleda Zia agreed after two hours of talks here on Tuesday. The External Affairs Ministry spokesman told presspersons that the Home Secretaries of the two countries would meet often and exchange information. The Joint Rivers Commission too would meet frequently to address water disputes ... Two pacts - a revised trade accord and another to prevent illicit narcotics trafficking - were signed in the presence of the Prime Ministers... "We believe sincerely that India and its neighbours have a common destiny. One cannot prosper without the other, and it is only through cooperation within the region that we can compete outside it. We believe it is our fundamental interest to see a strong, stable and economically strong Bangladesh making its full contribution to regional development," he said...

The Daily Excelsior 22 March 2006

Four Babbar Khalsa terrorists arrested

Chandigarh, March 21: Four Babbar Khalsa terrorists were arrested here today and one kg RDX, arms and ammunition were seized from their possession with police saying they confessed to their affiliation to the outfit. Three BKI terrorists, including their India operations chief, had been arrested from Delhi yesterday... Yadav said during the preliminary interrogation the arrested ultras disclosed that they were part of the Babbar Khalsa module controlled by Jagtar Singh Tara. The four identified as Sukhwinder Singh alias Sukhi alias bullet, Dilbagh Singh, Ranjit Singh, all residents of Ropar district in Punjab and Balbir Singh alias Nepali, a resident of Solan district in Himachal Pradesh were in touch with other BKI activists and were one of the several modules raised by the Babbar Khalsa for the revival of terrorism... Yadav said that the recoveries were one AK-47 Rifle with 15 cartridges from Sukhwinder Singh, one 0.38 bore colt revolver and five cartridges from Balbir Singh, one kgm of RDX explosive with four detonators from Dilbagh Singh and one cut barrel 12 bore gun with two cartridges from Ranjit Singh...

The Hindu 24 March 2006

LeT militant held, 9 kg of RDX recovered (Press Trust of India)

Srinagar: A Lashkar-e-Toiba (LeT) militant, allegedly involved in the recent explosion at Sopore that killed a paramilitary personnel, was arrested and a huge cache of arms and explosives, including 9 kg of RDX, was recovered in Jammu and Kashmir, a defence spokesman said on Thursday. On a tip-off, the Army arrested LeT militant Ashan-ul-Haq alias Tahir, a resident of Noorbagh village, from Sopore area of Baramulla district on Thursday, the spokesman said. He said the militant confessed to having hurled grenades on February 14 and 27 in Sopore, fired at the Rashtriya Rifles headquarters and attacked a BSF post on March 19 which left a BSF jawan dead and over 25 people injured.

The Hindustan Times 24 March 2006

Modi was Harkat's target (United News of India)

Ahmedabad, March 22: Gujarat police on Wednesday said Chief Minister Narendra Modi was a target of four slain terrorists of Harkat-ul-Mujahedeen. One of the terrorists had also visited Bangalore where they had gunned down a mathematics scholar at the Indian Institute of Science recently. Four terrorists -- Azaan, self-styled chief commander of Harkat-ul-Mujahadeen in Jammu and Kashmir, Phurkan Iqbal Ahmed, a resident of Karachi, and Mohammad Ayub and Mudassar, both Kashmiris, were gunned down by the Gujarat police in an encounter last week. Deputy Commissioner of Police Manoj Shashidhar on Wednesday said the terrorists killed in the encounter in Ahmedabad on Friday had plans to target Chief Minister Narendra Modi and spread terror across the state...

The Hindu 30 March 2006

Terrorist threat (PTI)

Ghaziabad: A high alert has been sounded here and in Hapur after police received letters from two militant outfits. The letters said the railway stations would be blown off and blasts carried out at all important places in the towns on April 11.