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Nearly 200 killed in chain blasts in Mumbai, Srinagar

MUMBAI

Terror coursed through India from its northern tip at noon to its financial heart at sundown, as synchronized grenade attacks in Srinagar gave way to multiple blasts on packed commuter trains in Mumbai, leaving nearly 200 dead on Tuesday.

Seven blasts ripped through first class compartments of suburban trains during the evening rush hours, wounding over 700 people at Matunga Road, Bandra, Mahim and Khar at one end and Jogeshwari, Borivli and Mira Road on the other.

There was no immediate claim of responsibility for the attacks, the worst in the city in over a decade. The first bomb went off at Khar at 6.25 p.m. and the last between Mira Road and Bhayander at 7.09 p.m.

The multiple explosions were a bloody throwback to the blasts that maimed the city and killed 257 in March 1993, with the difference that commuters on Mumbai's lifeline were targeted this time and not symbols of financial might like the Bombay Stock Exchange.

Commuters fled stations in panic after the explosions and mobile phone lines were jammed. Several bodies lay scattered on tracks. Television pictures showed twisted rail carriages and people in bloodstained clothes carrying the dead and wounded on stretchers. "The blasts happened when the trains were most crowded," D.K. Shankaran, state chief secretary, said.

Prime Minister Manmohan Singh appealed to the people to remain calm and expressed the government's resolve to "fight and defeat the evil designs of terrorists". Sonia Gandhi reached the city by night.

"The government will take all possible measures to maintain law and order and defeat the forces of terrorism," Singh said after an emergency meeting in Delhi.



The mangled compartment of one of the blast affected local trains stands at a railway station in Mumbai .

The impact of some of the blasts, suspected to have been triggered by RDX, was so huge that the walls and roofs of train bogies were ripped off. At Matunga Road, a part of the platform shed was blown off.

"We ran for our life as no one knew what was happening around us. Some people were trampled in the rush," a survivor at Khar station said.

City police chief A.N. Roy said it was difficult to confirm the explosive used. "It is a bomb blast. We are not sure if it is RDX or not."

The police, however, suspect the hand of the Lashkar-e-Toiba. Two Lashkar modules were busted in Aurangabad recently and 43 kg of RDX seized. Intelligence had then indicated the presence of sleeper modules in Mumbai.

Immediately after the blasts, all suburban and long-distance trains on the western railway line were suspended. The police cordoned off major road intersections, railway stations and exit points. Late Tuesday night, the Andheri-Bandra line was reopened.

There were frenzied scenes at stations with people scrambling to get alternative modes of transport home.

At Churchgate, frantic commuters tried to force-hop onto vans or other four-wheelers to get home.

Dazed survivors with wounds on their heads, legs and hands waited at railway stations, with little sign of any emergency medical aid.

"We heard a loud blast in one of the train compartments. When we rushed there and looked, we saw people with severed limbs and grievous injuries," a witness said, standing in a blood-spattered coach.

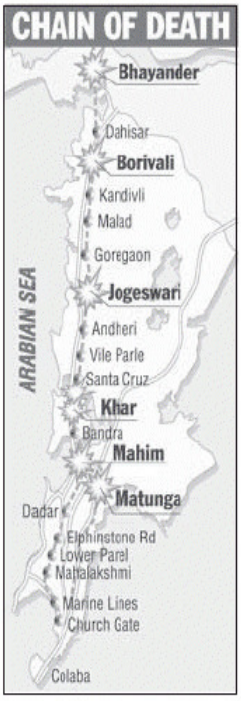
"There were no police or railway people to help."

For four hours after the blasts, cellular and land line networks collapsed, hampering communication. Roads were jammed with traffic as hundreds of stranded train passengers scouted for alternative transport.

By late night, most of the wounded had been ferried to private and municipal hospitals, including V.N. Desai, Sion, Cooper and Bhabha.

"At 10 p.m., the seven municipal hospitals had 140 people confirmed dead and 340 injured. Additional doctors have reached hospitals. Blood donors are queueing up," municipal commissioner Johny Joseph said.

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WAVES conference concludes



Payal Shah lights a lamp to mark the opening of the sixth biennial World Association of Vedic Studies (WAVES) conference, held at the University of Houston July 8-10 . *See Page 6 for more details.*

COMMUNITY NEWS

Sixth Vedic studies (WAVES) conference a huge success

HOUSTON

Where could you find nearly 150 scholars and professors of philosophy, religion, history, languages, science, engineering and medical sciences from Asia, Europe and the Americas who were all interested in exploring the various aspects of Vedic traditions, especially as relating to global peace? Where could you find several hundred Hindu community leaders and thinkers joining in with those scholars in fruitful discussion and debate?

If you said at the Sixth Biennial International Conference hosted by the World Association for Vedic Studies (WAVES) held in Houston, from July 7 to 10, you are correct.

One of the amazing aspects of the conference was the opportunity for Hindu-Americans, other Americans, and Hindus residing in India to interact with scholars from various countries of the world.

Having so many people of varied backgrounds together at one time at the University of Houston made for many stimulating and fruitful discussions and renewal of old friendships and the beginning of new ones.

Swami Vidyadhishananda Giri, who, from his "pre-Sanyasin" days, has a strong background in sciences and a deep understanding of the universality and global extent of Vedic culture, was the inaugural speaker as well as a keynote speaker.

His talks utilized technology, not common for a spiritually realized master, as well as demonstrated a deep understanding and appreciation of the "mysteries" of self-generated Puranic temples. Keynote speaker Dr. S. Kalyanaraman, who has compiled a seven-volume encyclopedia of the Saraswati, spoke not only on the ancient Saraswati civilization, but applied the knowledge thus gained to creating a system to link the rivers in modern India to solve an ongoing resources problem.

He expects this to be implemented within the next decade or so.

The range of subjects covered included yoga, Vedanta, Ayurveda, mathematical sciences, micro-technologies, consciousness studies, neuroscience studies, temples, architecture, archaeology, history, scripture, culture, music, visual arts and more.

Abhinav Dwivedi, VP of Hindu University of America commented that "there were so many topics that it was some times difficult to choose one and let go others. There were highly philosophical to extremely practical topics covered."

The talks that emphasized applications included Dr. Kavita Chandwani's talk on research she has done on the use of yoga with breast cancer patients, Sheetal Shah's report on "Hindu Human Rights 2005" which was prepared by Hindu American Foundation, and Dr. Narayan Komnath's presentation on economically feasible, micro-electrical power generation using variable wind turbines for every Indian village. Several speakers talked about the California textbook initiative in getting inaccurate and demeaning information deleted from the sixth grade textbooks and its relevance for the rest of the nation.



One of the most important sessions was that organized for Saturday with the assistance of Hindu Student Council. Young people from 14 to 35 were invited to two back-to-back sessions in which the learnings from Vedic thought and their applications to everyday life were discussed. (Below) A section of the audience. Photos: Vijay Pallod



In fact, as Dr. Yvette Rosser noted, "a more realistic and less sensational presentation is developing due to the input of practicing Hindus into the academic environment. This positive impact is introducing India to Americans without the colonial period stereotypes. Conferences like WAVES are helping to usher in the new era of understanding." There were several non-Hindu scholars who addressed the confer-

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COMMUNITY NEWS





Invited scholars and organizers at the opening session. (Left) One of several cultural programs presented by Hindu youth. Photos: Vijay Pallod

WAVES conference

From Page 6

ence or presented papers. Among them Prof. Hel French (Univ of South Carolina), Prof. Donald Lyons (Director, West Virginia Univ), Prof. Oleg Perzashkevich (Asst Prof of Ancient & Medieval Dept, Belarusian State Univ.), Howard Beckman (Director, Vedic Cultural Fellowship), Dr. Guy Beck (Univ. Of North Carolina-Wilmington) and Klaus Witz (Univ. of Illinois).

Perhaps one of the most important sessions was that organized for Saturday with the assistance of Hindu Student Council. Young people from 14 to 35 were invited to two back-to-back sessions in which the learnings from Vedic thought and their applications to everyday life were discussed.

David Frawley, Swami Vidyadhishananda Giri, Janak Dave from BAPS, and others not only spoke directly with the youth, but answered questions from youth only, without parents being present. "The youth rejuvenated the room and the scholars rejuvenated the youth" was how 10-year-old Shivam Dave put it. A young adult, Kirthi Jain, said the conference "was like a spiritual journey and there was a lot to learn during the interaction with so many learned people."

When they are back home, particularly helpful to attendees will be the souvenir which includes abstracts of most of the talks and the CDROM which has many of the talks in full and others in abstract form. As many of the sessions were held in parallel, no one could experience all that transpired but with these resources attendees can learn even from those sessions they could not attend.

Although much of the conference was very serious, the Saturday evening cultural program coordinated by Mrs. Usha Pathak was quite colorful. With about 70 young people involved, including students at Rathna Kumar's Anjali School of Dance, and participants in the local HSS Balgokulams, the program was very spectacular.

Subhash Gupta, local coordinator, was pleased that the "Sunday evening banquet brought together the conference attendees with the leaders of the Houston Hindu- and Indian-American community organizations, many of whom had sponsored tables.

This showed the unity of the community and the interest of the various groups in getting involved with other activities."

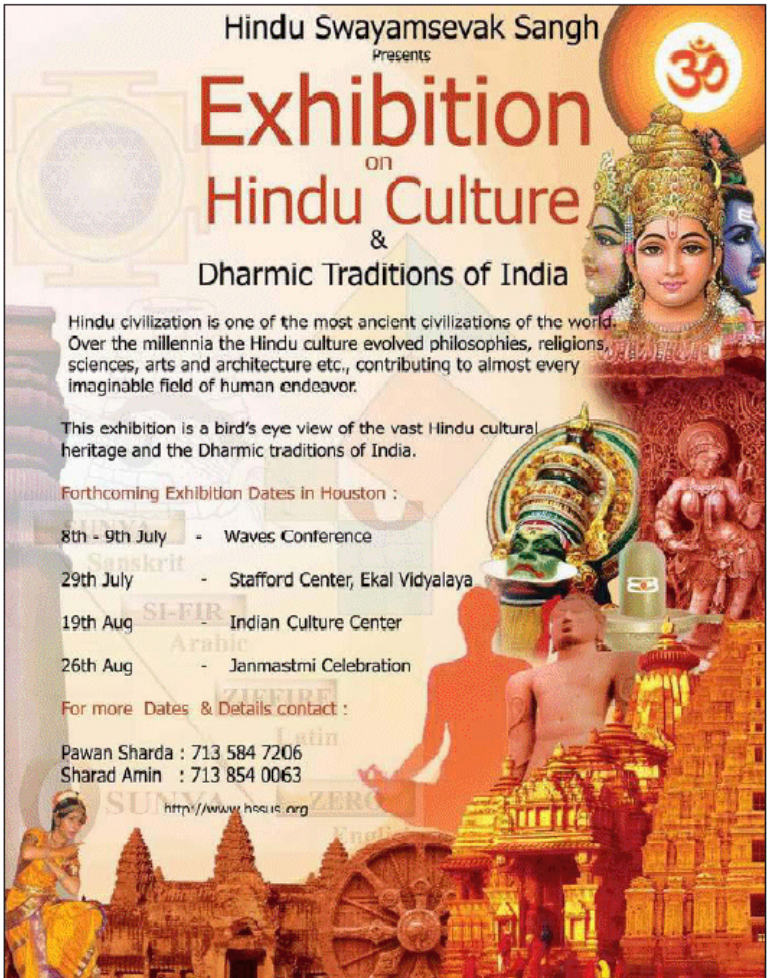
Dr. John Antel, Dean and Professor of Economics at the University of Houston welcomed the community and announced that courses in Hindi, Archeology and Anthropology will start very soon. He emphasized the need to learn Hindi and Indian history.

A special feature of the conference was that attendees were able to view the 31 posters on various aspects of Indian and Hindu thought and practices, including science, architecture, Namaste, Sikh dharma, Jain dharma, Buddhist dharma, Hindu women, temples, and much more that have been created by volunteers of Hindu Swayamsevak Sangh-USA and is now being exhibited throughout the USA as a traveling exhibit.

Prof. Surendra Dwivedi, President of WAVES, and Subhash Gupta worked with dozens of scholars and community workers both in Houston and throughout the US to make this conference possible and a great success according to the participants who thought it was the best conference in the organization's history.

Those volunteers worked tirelessly over several weeks and dedicated hundreds of hours towards the success of the conference. WAVES has proposed that the next conference be held in Orlando, Florida, cooperatively with the Hindu University which had a number of board members, faculty and administrators as attendees and presenters.

For more information visit www.wavesinternational.net or contact Subhash Gupta at 281-565-6687 or Surendra Dwivedi at 337-981-9572.



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