

## TDP leader, seven others killed in bomb explosion

Eight people, including a leader of the opposition Telugu Desam Party (TDP) and his brother, were killed when country-made bombs they were allegedly carrying in their car exploded in Andhra Pradesh's Kurnool district Saturday. TDP supporters termed it a pre-meditated attack by rivals.

TDP leader Kapatralla Venkatappa Naidu and his brother Shivshankar Naidu were travelling in a Tata Sumo in Bodannuru village, about 60 km from Kurnool town and 300 km from here, when a truck hit their vehicle.

Police said country-made bombs, which were allegedly kept in the Sumo, exploded killing eight people on the spot. Three others were injured and their condition is stated to be serious.

Among those killed were Naidu's two gunmen, a bank manager, driver and two supporters.

The driver and cleaner of the truck reportedly fled from the scene after the incident, which looked like an accident. Naidu's supporters, however, alleged that it was pre-planned attack by rivals.

The incident led to tension in the area as Naidu's supporters came out on the streets, damaging buses and other public property.

Naidu, a powerful factional leader in the region who has several criminal cases pending against him, had a long running feud with V. Padma, who enjoys the support of the ruling Congress party.

The two groups were fighting for the last three decades for supremacy in the region, notorious for deadly factional fights.

Naidu, who escaped about a dozen attacks in the past, had served as TDP member of the Zilla Parishad Territorial Committee (ZPTC) and was a powerful factional leader during TDP rule.

His rival Padma returned to Kapatralla village in 2005, about three decades after her family was forced to flee the village. Supported by some Congress leaders, she tried to gain control of her ancestral property, which was allegedly encroached by Naidu, leading to tension in the village.

After Padma's return, Naidu and his supporters were reportedly in hiding. Fearing for his life, the TDP leader had also sought police protection

Rayalseema, comprising Kurnool and three others districts, has a long history of factional violence.

Factions, fighting for domination in the villages and enjoying support of the two main political parties, often target each other. The factions are notorious for brutal attacks with bombs and sharp-edged weapons.

The TDP alleges that more than 100 of its leaders and cadres were killed by the Congress party since it came to power four years ago. They include former minister and TDP legislator Paritala Ravi, who was gunned down by a rival group in Anantapur three years ago.

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