

## Hyderabad peaceful on first anniversary of blast

Amid tight security, the city remained peaceful Sunday, the first anniversary of the bomb blast at the historic Mecca Masjid.

Nine people were killed when the bomb exploded during Friday prayers at the 17th century mosque this day last year. Five more people were killed in the subsequent police firing on protestors near the mosque.

The police have made elaborate security arrangements to prevent any untoward incident. Security was beefed up at the mosque and Charminar, the symbol of Hyderabad, as well as other monuments and public places in the city.

A large number of policemen were deployed around the mosque as security personnel kept the vigil through surveillance cameras from atop the Charminar. Every person entering the mosque was thoroughly frisked.

The afternoon prayers at the mosque passed off peacefully. Security was tightened at places of worship and in the communally sensitive old city. The paramilitary Rapid Action Force (RAF) was deployed. The police deployed 16 teams of video-graphers to keep an eye on trouble-makers.

Police officials said the vigil would continue as some organisations are holding meetings to mark the day. Majlis-e-Ittehadul Muslimeen (MIM), a Muslim political party, is holding a public meeting Sunday night at Khilwat Ground near the mosque.

It was business as usual around the 400-year-old Charminar, which is thronged by hundreds of tourists even Sundays. Many shops in the famous bangles market and adjoining commercial centres also remained open.

Black flags were put up on streets and a few buildings in the old city as people recalled the ghastly crime committed by the terrorists a year ago. It was the first major terror attack in the city.

The families of the victims recalled with horror the events of the black day when their loved ones were either killed in the blast or fell to police bullets. While victims' families alleged that the police firing was unprovoked, the police officials maintained that the mob was violent and they had to open fire to control it.

The Peace Committee, comprising representatives from all communities, took out a peace march near the Charminar. Marching from Gulzar Houz to Madina, the participants -- including religious leaders -- raised slogans against terrorists and demanded that the culprits be punished. They held all-religion prayers meeting.

Even a year after the blast, the police have failed to arrest a single accused. While the investigations were handed over to the Central Bureau of Investigations (CBI) and dozens of suspects were picked up by the police, the culprits are yet to be caught. The CBI is also yet to file the charge sheet. The judicial inquiry into the police firing is still not completed.

The police claimed that the bomb attack was carried out by Bangladesh-based Harkatul

Jihad-e-Islami but could not identify or arrest those directly involved.

The investigators are now pinning their hopes on the investigations into last week's serial blasts at Jaipur. A city police team, which visited Jaipur, found that there were similarities in the two blasts.

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