

## Six killed, 39 injured in twin blasts in Assam

At least six people were killed and 39 injured, including five policemen, in two powerful explosions Sunday in India's restive northeastern state of Assam, officials said.

On Sunday morning, a powerful blast rocked a weekly bazaar in village Kumarikata, about 70 km west of Guwahati.

'The market was teeming with people when the explosion took place, killing six people on the spot and wounding about 35 others,' a senior police official said by telephone from Kumarikata.

The official who requested anonymity said there were two Assam policemen among the injured. 'The condition of at least 15 of them is stated to be critical,' the official said.

The injured were shifted to a local hospital with multiple wounds.

Most of the injured were either shoppers or vendors at the multipurpose market selling a variety of goods - from vegetables to fish, groceries to clothes.

'The bomb was strapped to a parked bicycle,' the official said.

Police blamed the outlawed United Liberation Front of Asom (ULFA), a rebel group fighting for an independent homeland since 1979, for the two blasts.

This is the third blast in the last two days - on Friday 10 people were injured in a blast at a market in the eastern Nagaon town.

In another incident, militants riding a motorcycle attacked a security patrol at village Tetelia in Nagaon district, about 135 km east of Assam's main city of Guwahati. The incident took place around 8.30 p.m.

'The militants lobbed a grenade at a police patrol team injuring three security personnel and a civilian,' police official A. Das said over telephone. The injured were shifted to a hospital.

Meanwhile, a surrendered ULFA rebel was shot dead by unidentified gunmen in the northern town of Mangaldoi late Sunday.

'We suspect the ULFA was behind the killing of the surrendered rebel,' a police official said.

The recent spate of violence comes even as several rebel commanders of the ULFA's 28th battalion declared a unilateral ceasefire after differences in opinion with the outfit's central leadership. The 28th battalion is considered ULFA's most potent striking unit.

'Sunday's blast is probably an attempt by the ULFA's 709 battalion to demonstrate the fact that they are still a force to be reckoned with despite their 28th battalion entering into a ceasefire,' the police official said.

The ULFA is yet to own up for the explosion. More than 10,000 people have lost their lives to

insurgency in Assam during the past two decades.

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