

## Military crackdown in Assam after attacks on migrant workers

Authorities in Assam Wednesday announced a massive military crackdown after separatist attacks overnight left five Hindi-speaking migrant workers dead and one injured, officials said.

'We are taking some very strong anti-insurgency steps and security forces are put on high alert across Assam with army, police and paramilitary troopers, deployed in strength in vulnerable areas,' Assam Chief Minister Tarun Gogoi told IANS.

Heavily armed militants of the outlawed United Liberation Front of Asom (ULFA) shot five migrant workers and wounded one in two separate attacks in eastern Dibrugarh and Sivasagar districts. Four daily labourers were gunned down near village Belbari in Dibrugarh, about 470 km east of Guwahati.

Another person was shot dead near Borhat in the adjoining Sivasagar district and his son critically wounded in the attack.

Police blamed the ULFA for the fresh attacks on Hindi-speaking workers, who hailed from Bihar and have made Assam their home for decades, doing odd jobs as brick kiln workers, fishermen and daily wage earners.

'The attacks on innocent people are inhuman,' the chief minister said.

Tuesday's attacks came after four people were killed in clashes Sunday between indigenous Assamese and tribal tea plantation workers in eastern Assam over blocking a national highway to protest the death of a youth in an alleged staged shootout by the army.

The plantation workers clashed with the anti-army protestors saying the road block had led to shortage of food supplies to the tea gardens.

Two people were killed Monday in a bomb blast set off by the rebels at a market in Guwahati.

The ULFA, which is fighting for a separate Assamese homeland and demanding the expulsion of all non-Assamese people, especially those from the Hindi-speaking northern belt of India, had killed about 60 migrant workers in January in a wave of attacks.

The attacks have triggered fear and panic among hundreds of Hindi speaking people in Assam.

'People are panicking and there is a fear of more such attacks. We are really worried for our lives. We have been residing in Assam for decades, but now we don't know whether to stay or flee to safer areas,' said Mohan Singh, a grocer in Tengakhat town in Dibrugarh.

'The attacks were reminiscent of the one we saw in January,' said Hariprasad Gupta, another trader in the adjoining district of Tinsukia. Both Singh and Gupta originally hail from Bihar.

'We are committed to protecting the lives and ensuring security to everybody,' Gogoi said.

The killings in January prompted [New Delhi](#) to launch a massive military offensive in which around

60 ULFA rebels were killed and about 570 arrested in separate raids.

Since peace talks collapsed between New Delhi and the rebels last September, Assam has witnessed a series of deadly attacks that authorities have blamed on the ULFA.

In 2000, the outfit killed at least 100 Hindi-speaking people in a series of attacks after vowing to free the state of 'non-Assamese migrant workers' who they say take away their jobs.

Separatist violence has wracked Assam, the northeast's most populous state, since 1979, claiming at least 20,000 lives.

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