

Terror run in Assam by militants, Hindi-speakers fresh targets

Assam is on the boil with separatists wreaking havoc by carrying out a string of explosions in crowded public places and once again targeting Hindi-speaking migrant workers, triggering fear and panic.

In separate raids and bomb blasts across Assam since Sunday, 15 people have been killed and 28 wounded in the attacks linked to the upcoming Independence Day celebrations.

The latest in the spiralling violence in Assam was the killing of eight Hindi-speaking migrant workers late Wednesday in the eastern Karbi Anglong district.

Three people were also injured - all the victims belonged to two families employed to till farmland by locals.

The attack was carried out jointly by militants of the outlawed United Liberation Front of Asom (ULFA) and the Karbi Longri North Cachar Liberation Front (KLNLF) - the victims were dragged out of their homes and shot dead from close range with automatic weapons.

'The attack on innocent civilians, particularly the Hindi-speaking workers, is nothing but acts of desperation by the militants,' L.R. Bishnoi, deputy inspector general of police in Karbi Anglong, told IANS over the phone.

The attacks are reminiscent of the wave of brutal killings by the ULFA in January targeting Hindi-speakers in which about 61 people were killed in parts of eastern Assam.

'The fresh attacks have once again led to fear and panic among the Hindi-speaking community in Assam,' said Ravi Singh, a businessman originally hailing from eastern Bihar state.

ULFA militants have carried out seven powerful blasts, killing three people and wounding 25, since Sunday. In the southern Assam district of Cachar, tribal militants of the outlawed Dima Haolam Daogah late Tuesday attacked a village market and killed four people.

'All these attacks are being carried out by the militants to make their presence felt ahead of Independence Day,' Assam Chief Minister Tarun Gogoi said.

In April-May, ULFA and KLNLF rebels kidnapped about 15 people with three of the hostages killed in captivity. The casualties include the Food Corporation of India executive director P.C. Ram and Cement Corporation of India manager Kailash Jha.

Security analysts said the stepped up attacks by the ULFA and its tribal ally, the KLNLF, are seen as attempts by the rebels to pressurise the government into succumbing to their terms for peace talks.

'The ULFA has been demanding that some of their jailed leaders be released and that [New Delhi](#) agrees to discuss their demand for sovereignty. These attacks are nothing but arm twisting tactics to force the government to toe their line,' said Hare Krishna Deka, former Assam police chief.

From pressure cooker bombs to explosives concealed in sacks and strapped to bicycles to landmines and other improvised devices, militants in Assam have put to shame claims of a massive anti-insurgency operation.

'Why can't the security agencies prevent such attacks from recurring? What is the point in talking about military operations if rebels can come and attack wherever they want,' asked Anwar Hussain, a middle-aged man who lost his teenage son last month in a blast in Guwahati.

Security officials privately admit being nonplussed by the modus operandi of the rebels.

'It appears there is no existence of a government in Assam the way bombings are going on in the state. This is a low-intensity war and the worst sufferers are the common people. Everyone here is a loser,' said Sammujjal Bhattacharya, advisor of the All Assam Students' Union.

'Assam is turning out to be a killing field and only god can save commoners like us,' said Mamoni Das, a housewife who lost her daily-wage earning husband to an explosion in Guwahati, earlier this year.

Syed Zarir Hussain (© IANS / India eNews)