

Rebel attacks kill 63 in north India

After three days of fighting, India's federal home minister says peace talks with militant groups will continue

BY WASBIR HUSSAIN
THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

GAUHATI, India — Sleeping villagers heard men outside their huts, calling them to come out. They stumbled into the early morning darkness Monday, and the intruders began firing automatic weapons, killing six people and wounding seven.

The assault brought the death toll to 63 from three days of suspected rebel attacks in India's northeast, where dozens of ethnic guerrilla groups are fighting for separate homelands and battling each other for supremacy.

The killings in the village of Gelapukhuri — 130 miles north of Gauhati, the capital of Assam state — followed the weekend bombings of a train station, utilities, a tea plantation and a crowded marketplace.

Federal Home Minister Shivraj Patil said the attacks would not dissuade the national government from supporting peace talks with militant groups in Assam and neighboring Nagaland state.

"We have not closed the doors for talks, but it is our duty to save human lives," Patil told reporters Monday after visiting the violence-hit areas.

Nearly 40 separatist groups representing multiple ethnicities have been fighting for almost 60 years in India's mountainous northeast region of seven states, wedged between Bangladesh, Bhutan and Myanmar.

In Nagaland, where 28 have been killed since Saturday, the main separatist group condemned the attacks and suggested rival outfits were trying to disrupt a cease-fire and the peace process.

The death toll in Assam — where the state government offered to begin peace talks with rebels in mid-October — rose to 35 on Monday after the village attack,

which state police officer P. Baruah blamed on the National Democratic Front of Boroland. Sunday was the 18th anniversary of the founding of the NDFB, which is demanding a homeland for Boroland, a region that straddles Nagaland and Assam.

On Sunday, the commander of the outlawed United Liberation Front of Asom, or ULFA, Paresh Barua, reportedly claimed responsibility for four of the attacks in Assam state, where the group has been fighting for a separate homeland since 1979 in an insurgency that has left more than 10,000 dead in the past decade.

"This is our answer to Assam Chief Minister Tarun Gogoi's cease-fire call," an English-language newspaper, The Sentinel, quoted Barua as saying.

"The entire string of attacks was a joint operation by the ULFA and the NDFB," said Assam's top police official, Inspector-General Khagen Sarma. He gave no details, and police said no arrests had been made.

Shops and schools were closed and most traffic halted in parts of Assam on Monday during a dawn-to-dusk strike called by the All Bodo Students' Union to protest the killings. The students' group had helped broker a peace accord between the federal government and an insurgent group, the Bodo Liberation Tigers, in western Assam in 2003.

At least 18 bombings and shootings have taken place in Nagaland and Assam since Saturday. The attacks — particularly an explosion Saturday that ripped through a railway station full of commuters — angered some separatist leaders and filled civilians with terror.

People suffering severe burns or shrapnel wounds were airlifted Monday to the Indian capital, New Delhi, for specialized treatment.

U.N. signs agreement with war crimes tribunal

The International Criminal Court will prosecute war crimes when countries cannot or will not do so

BY EDITH M. LEDERER
THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

UNITED NATIONS — U.N. Secretary-General Kofi Annan and the president of the International Criminal Court signed an agreement Monday on the working relationship between the United Nations and the world's first permanent war crimes tribunal.

Although the court is an independent judicial institution, it was born out of the U.N. system. The agreement provides a legal basis for a permanent relationship between the two organizations as well as information-sharing and judicial assistance.

The International Criminal Court is the culmination of a campaign for a permanent war crimes tribunal that began with the Nuremberg trials after World War II. It can prosecute cases of genocide, war crimes and crimes against humanity committed after July 1, 2002, but will step in only when countries are unwilling or unable to dispense justice themselves.

The United States vehemently opposes the court, arguing that it

could be used for frivolous or politically motivated prosecution of American troops. But the 97 countries that have ratified the 1998 Rome Treaty counter that it contains enough safeguards to prevent any frivolous prosecutions.

Annan, a staunch supporter of the court, told the court's president, Judge Philippe Kirsch, of Canada, that he has made the "rule of law" a top priority for the remainder of his tenure, which ends Dec. 31, 2006, and he will tell all U.N. agencies and programs "to give you full cooperation."

"So I'm working for you now," Annan said.

The agreement includes an exchange of representatives between the United Nations and the court, the ICC's participation in the U.N. General Assembly as an observer, and U.N. cooperation if the court requests testimony of U.N. officials.

The U.N.-ICC agreement was drafted over four years and adopted first by the ICC Assembly of State Parties in The Hague, Netherlands, on Sept. 7 and then by the U.N. General As-

sembly on Sept. 13, despite opposition from the United States.

A U.S. official, speaking on condition of anonymity, noted that under the agreement the United Nations will not pay any costs for the ICC, which means the United States will not foot any part of the bill for the court's operation.

This means that U.N. human rights, refugee and genocide experts may assist the ICC and, most importantly, U.N. humanitarian and peacekeeping missions can provide vital information on atrocities in conflict areas, said William Pace, head of the Coalition for the International Criminal Court, an advocacy group that includes more than 1,000 civil society organizations.

Pace said despite opposition from President Bush's administration, the agreement reveals that the majority of the 191 U.N. member states "think otherwise."

"By allowing for crucial cooperation between two of the most powerful global justice institutions, this agreement will play an important role in the fight to end impunity for the perpetrators of the world's most atrocious crimes," Pace said.

New York doctor wrongly linked to anthrax mailings

Kenneth Berry has not faced any charges, but his lawyer says the FBI investigation ruined his life

BY WAYNE PARRY
THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

TOMS RIVER, N.J. — Federal investigators are destroying the life of a New York doctor by wrongly linking him to fatal 2001 anthrax mailings, his lawyer said Monday.

Agents descended on the Wellsville, N.Y., home of Dr. Kenneth Berry on Aug. 5, as well as his parents' New Jersey shore summer home, for searches described by an FBI spokesman as part of the anthrax investigation. Berry has

not been charged.

That same day, the doctor, who founded an organization in 1997 that trains medical professionals to respond to chemical and biological attacks, was arrested after a domestic dispute at a Point Pleasant Beach motel.

"I believe the family cracked under the pressure," Berry's lawyer, Clifford Lazzaro, said outside court after a hearing was postponed in that case.

Berry subsequently lost his job

as an emergency room doctor at the University of Pittsburgh Medical Center.

"He has already lost his job. Must he lose his marriage, too?" Lazzaro asked. "When he is cleared, it will only make this tragedy that much worse that he not only lost his job but also lost his family for a crime he did not commit."

The FBI has declined to comment.

Five people died and 17 fell ill in the fall of 2001 in the anthrax mailings that targeted government and media officials. The attacks unsettled a nation already reeling from the Sept. 11 terror attacks.

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