

Beat: Travel

Twin bombings hit shopping area in southern India, killing 16

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USPA News - Sixteen people were killed Thursday and nearly 120 others were injured when two bomb blasts ripped through a bustling shopping area in the southern Indian city of Hyderabad, the country's home minister said on Friday after visiting the scene. The first bomb went off at approximately 6:58 p.m. local time on Thursday at a local bus stop near Venkatadri theater in the Dilsukhnagar area of Hyderabad, the capital of the southern state of Andhra Pradesh.

It was followed three minutes later by a second bomb blast about 150 meters away near a snack shop. "Preliminary investigations reveal that the improvised explosive devices (IEDs) were placed on bicycles, causing explosions at both the places," Union Home Minister Shri Sushilkumar Shinde said. "The State Police and a team of the National Investigation Agency (NIA) Branch office at Hyderabad immediately reached the place of occurrence and cordoned off the area and collected the evidence." Shinde said sixteen people were killed and 117 others were injured, including four people who remained in a critical condition on Friday. "The state government immediately deployed emergency medical response teams along with 25 ambulances to take the injured to the hospitals," he said. The home minister, along with a number of other senior government officials, visited the scene of the attack on Friday and spoke with some of the injured at area hospitals. "I extend my heartfelt condolences for the bereaved families who lost their near and dear ones in the blasts," he said. No group immediately claimed responsibility for the bombings, but some officials blamed them on Indian Mujahideen. "The Government is committed to combat such cowardly terror attacks and it shall make all possible efforts to apprehend the perpetrators and masterminds behind the blasts and ensure that they are punished as per the law," Shinde said. Earlier, Indian Prime Minister Manmohan Singh strongly condemned the attack. "This is a dastardly attack, the guilty will not go unpunished," he said, while appealing to the public to remain calm and to maintain peace. He also directed his government to extend all possible help to authorities in Andhra Pradesh. Internationally, United Nations (UN) Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon also expressed his condemnation over the "indiscriminate attacks against civilians" in Hyderabad. "[Ban] extends his heartfelt condolences to the families of the victims and to the Government and people of India," his spokesman said. In Washington, D.C., U.S. State Department spokeswoman Victoria Nuland described the bombings as a "cowardly attack." British Minister of State Hugo Swire, saying the blasts are a "shocking reminder" of the terrorist threat in India, said the United Kingdom will work closely with India to tackle the threat of terrorism wherever it occurs.

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