

NEARBY



Man kills wife, three children in Ghaziabad

GHAZIABAD
A man allegedly killed his wife and three children in Ghaziabad and posted a confession video on the family WhatsApp group, the police said on Sunday. He was upset after he lost his job.

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Rohit Tiwari murder: cops probe role of wife

NEW DELHI
Five days after the son of late politician N.D. Tiwari, Rohit Shekhar Tiwari, was found dead, a police officer on Sunday said they were probing the role of his wife and two domestic helps.

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Seven killed as bus rams truck on expressway

MAINPURI
A private bus on its way to Varanasi from Delhi rammed a truck on the Agra-Lucknow Expressway, killing seven passengers and injuring 34, police said on Sunday.

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Serial blasts across Sri Lanka claim 200, several injured

- Eight explosions target churches, luxury hotels in Colombo, Batticaloa
- Access to social media platforms, including Whatsapp & Viber, blocked
- Seven suspects arrested in a Colombo suburb
- Most blasts triggered by suicide bombers, says Defence Minister

MEERA SRINIVASAN
COLOMBO

Over 200 people were killed and nearly 500 injured in a series of blasts that shook Sri Lanka on Easter Sunday. Churches and luxury hotels were targeted in the deadliest incidents since the civil war ended a decade ago.

As many as eight blasts occurred in and around the capital Colombo and in the eastern city of Batticaloa on Sunday morning, as large groups gathered at churches for Easter services.

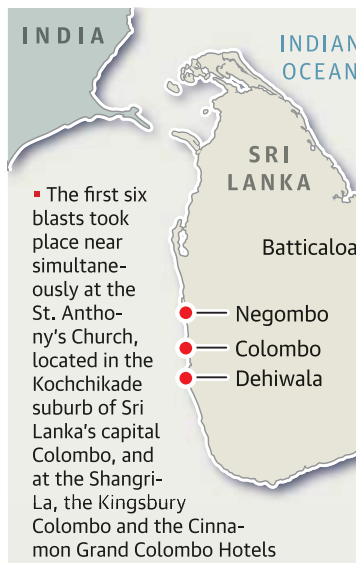
"Most of the blasts appear to have been suicide bombings," State Minister of Defence Ruwan Wijewardene told a press conference.

Hours after the coordinated attacks, police arrested seven suspects from a building in the Colombo suburb of Dematagoda. Even as the police operation was underway, an explosion took place, killing three policemen. More arrests were likely, official sources said.

Curfew imposed

Following the developments, authorities blocked access to social media including Facebook, Whatsapp and Viber to "prevent" misinformation. A curfew was declared till Monday morning.

No group has claimed responsibility for the blasts. Investigating authorities are yet to disclose the names of



■ The first six blasts took place near simultaneously at the St. Anthony's Church, located in the Kochchikade suburb of Sri Lanka's capital Colombo, and at the Shangri-La, the Kingsbury Colombo and the Cinnamon Grand Colombo Hotels

■ The other blasts took place after a lull at the St. Sebastian's Church in Negombo and the Zion Church in Batticaloa



Broken calm: A view of the St. Sebastian's Church in Negombo, north of Colombo, which was damaged in a blast on Sunday. ■ AP

the suspects or the alleged perpetrators.

President Maithripala Sirisena appealed for calm. "I have been shocked... The security forces have been asked to take all action necessary," Mr. Sirisena said.

Prime Minister Ranil Wickremesinghe termed the blasts as "cowardly attacks" and said his government was working to "contain the situation."

At least eight foreign nationals were confirmed dead by Sunday evening, while 27 others who were found

dead, were "believed to be foreigners", a senior official of the Sri Lankan Foreign Ministry said. Their nationalities are yet to be made known by the Ministry.

Fr. Kanapathipillai Deivendiran was to deliver the Easter Day message at the Zion Church in Batticaloa. "I went a little after 9 a.m. I was a few minutes late or you will not be speaking to me now," he told *The Hindu*.

"I didn't know that there had been a blast a few minutes before that, I just walked into the premises. As

I entered, I was shaken by the sight - walls had collapsed completely, there were bodies all over the floor," he said.

According to the director of the Batticaloa Teaching Hospital Kalaranjani Ganesalingam, 26 people were dead while 69 were admitted with injuries. "Six are still in the ICU. Everybody here is in a state of fear," she said.

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Four Indians among blast victims

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
KASARAGOD

Four Indian nationals were killed in the Colombo serial blasts while six others are reported to have escaped with minor injuries. The four victims have been identified as P.S. Raseena, Lakshmi, Narayan Chandrashekhar and Ramesh.

Businessman and TDP leader Amilineni Surendrababu and five of his friends, who were on holiday and

staying at the Shangri-La Hotel in Colombo, had a narrow escape as blasts hit the hotel on Sunday. Superintendent of Police, Anantapur, G.V.G. Ashok Kumar said the group from Andhra Pradesh was safe, but could not be contacted.

However, Ms. Raseena, from Mogral Puthur of Kasaragod district in Kerala, was not so lucky and was killed as she was checking out of the same hotel. According to re-

Man set off bomb at hotel buffet queue

The suicide bomber waited patiently in a queue for the Easter Sunday breakfast buffet at Cinnamon Grand Hotel before setting off explosives strapped to his back. Carrying a plate, the man, who had registered at the hotel the night before as Mohamed Azzam Mohamed, was just about to be served when he set off the bomb in the packed restaurant, a manager at the hotel said. The bomber also died. Parts of his body were taken away by the police. ► PAGE 12

Ready to enter Varanasi fray if Rahul asks: Priyanka

STAFF REPORTER
KALPETTA

All India Congress Committee general secretary Priyanka Gandhi-Vadra has said that she is willing to contest in the Varanasi parliamentary constituency in Uttar Pradesh, from where Prime

Minister Narendra Modi is seeking re-election.

Speaking to mediapersons just before concluding her two-day visit to Wayanad in Kerala on Sunday, Ms. Vadra said she was ready to enter the fray if she was asked to by her brother and Con-

gress leader Rahul Gandhi.

"I will be happy to contest in Varanasi if my brother Rahul Gandhi insists," Ms. Vadra said.

She dismissed Union Minister Uma Bharti's controversial remarks that the country will see her the way

it views a "thief's wife". "From my grandmother, grandfather, father, mother, they have said one thing or the other about all of my family. But we will keep on doing our job," she said.

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'Is our N-bomb for Diwali'

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
JAIPUR

Raising the pitch over India's nuclear capability, Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Sunday said his government, unlike the Congress, had refused to be intimidated by Pakistan's

nuclear threats and given it a "fitting reply" through the Balakot air strike.

"What do we have then? Have we kept our nuclear bomb for Diwali," the PM asked.

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Campaign for Phase 3 ends

SANDEEP PHUKAN
NEW DELHI

Campaigning for the third phase of polling in 116 Lok Sabha constituencies across 15 States and union territories ended on Sunday.

The third phase of vot-

ing on Tuesday will decide the fate of Bharatiya Janata Party president Amit Shah from Gandhinagar in Gujarat and Congress chief Rahul Gandhi from Wayanad in Kerala, his second seat.

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BJP fields 4 sitting MPs from Delhi for LS poll

Suspense over remaining three seats

JATIN ANAND
NEW DELHI

The Bharatiya Janata Party on Sunday fielded four of its sitting MPs from Delhi for the Lok Sabha election scheduled for May 12.

Union Minister Harsh Vardhan, Delhi BJP chief and one of the party's star campaigners Manoj Tiwari, Pravesh Verma and Ramesh Bidhuri have been fielded from the Chandni Chowk, North-East, West and South Delhi constituencies, respectively.

Other seats

Party insiders claimed that the names of the remaining candidates - to be fielded from the North-West, East and New Delhi seats, where AAP and Congress may contest the Lok Sabha poll together - were deliberately withheld as the BJP is awaiting clarity on the proposed alliance between AAP and the Congress.

"We will field sitting MPs on the remaining three seats if there is no alliance; if the alliance does go through, fresh faces are more than likely to be fielded," the leader added.

According to party sources, the BJP is likely to replace sitting New Delhi, East and North-West MPs



Harsh Vardhan

Meenakshi Lekhi, Maheish Girri and Udit Raj, respectively, with former India cricketer Gautam Gambhir, East Delhi MLA Om Prakash Sharma and senior party leader Anita Arya, respectively.

Nomination date

"The party is willing to wait even till Tuesday, the last day for filing of nominations," a party source said.

Dr. Vardhan, Mr. Tiwari, and Mr. Verma will file their nomination papers on Monday. Mr. Bidhuri will do so on Tuesday, the party said.

Of the three main parties in Delhi, AAP has declared the names for all the seven seats while the Congress is yet to announce its candidates. Both the parties are engaged in hectic parleys on a pre-poll tie-up to avoid division of votes.