

# Terror Blasts Cast a Pall Over Hindu Festival in India

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NEW DELHI, Nov. 1 - The traditionally vibrant festival of light celebrations here were subdued today, as many residents stayed away from markets and public places across the city in the wake of the weekend terror bombings.

The leader of the ruling Congress Party, Sonia Gandhi, said she would celebrate Diwali, the Hindu festival, as a mark of respect for the 62 people killed in blasts Saturday and for the thousands who died in the Kashmir earthquake of Oct. 8. It would be a "quiet day" for the prime minister, Manmohan Singh, his office said.

Tight security tempered the festive spirit on what is one of the [India's](#) biggest holidays. Many worshippers were frisked as they entered temples for prayers.

"The bombs have made a huge difference," Dinesh Gupta, a shopkeeper at the central Bengali market told The Associated Press, adding, "People are feeling very low. They don't want to celebrate Diwali the way they normally do."

The deputy home minister, Sri Prakash Jaiswal, said the police had uncovered "important clues" in the bombings that targeted two markets and a bus. Detectives were looking into the claims of one stallholder at the Paharganj market who said that shortly before the explosion occurred, he overheard a man telling a bicycle rickshaw driver that he would get out and walk because the traffic was so thick.

"It's very crowded ahead, I'll just get off and walk, you take the rickshaw until that stall," the suspected bomber told the rickshaw puller, according to the shopkeeper's account. The bag exploded moments later, killing the rickshaw's owner, 35-year-old Sadanand Paswan, and many bystanders.

A more detailed description of the suspected bus bomber has been circulated by the police after interviewing passengers. Detectives said they were looking for a casually dressed, unshaven man in his 20's seen by eyewitnesses leaving the bus shortly before the bag he left behind exploded.

The head of New Delhi's antiterrorism unit, Karnail Singh, said the bombers had deliberately targeted snack food stalls in the two markets because "they are generally crowded with women and children. The target was maximum damage."

The New Delhi police are working with colleagues in Jammu and Kashmir to get more information about the little-known Kashmiri group, Islamic Inquilab Mahaz, which

claimed responsibility for the blasts Sunday, but there is still no confirmation that this group was really behind the attack.

While there has been no official statement on who might be responsible for the tragedy, the prime minister, in a telephone call late Monday to the Pakistani president, Gen. [Pervez Musharraf](#), said there were foreign links to the bombings - a comment understood to be a veiled reference to [Pakistan](#)-based militants.

"We continue to be disturbed and dismayed at indications of the external linkages of terrorist groups with the Oct. 29 bombing," Mr. Singh told Mr. Musharraf.

"India expects Pakistan to act against terrorism directed at India," a foreign office spokesman quoted Mr. Singh as telling Pakistan's leader. The spokesman added: "The prime minister again drew the president's attention to Pakistan's commitment to ending cross-border terrorism."

Mr. Musharraf had telephoned Mr. Singh to denounce the attack and to offer his condolences. In a news conference earlier, he had condemned terrorism and promised his full cooperation with the Indian investigation.

Amid concern that the explosions might have a negative impact on the peace talks between India and Pakistan, Mr. Jaiswal stressed that the blasts would not be allowed to interfere with continuing negotiations.

"The Delhi serial blasts will have no effect on the ongoing peace process between India and Pakistan," Mr. Jaiswal said today. "There are some terrorist organizations who do not want relations between the two countries to improve, but they will not succeed in their designs."