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## **Bombs Aimed at India's Well-Off**

**By SOMINI SENGUPTA**

MUMBAI, India, July 12 — A bank worker did not make it home. A would-be software developer rested on a hospital gurney waiting for doctors to repair a broken arm. An engineer, fresh from meeting with a client, lay in a hospital morgue, recognizable by a ring on his finger.

As India's magnet city quietly arose Wednesday on the morning after a series of eight bombings along its suburban commuter train line, a closer portrait of a carefully calibrated crime emerged. The bombers, it turned out, systematically chose first-class men's compartments, poking a poisoned finger in the eye of the city's white-collar establishment.

The bombers, who remain unknown, most likely used military-style plastic explosives, the Indian authorities said. The synchronized nature of the blasts during the evening rush hour, intelligence experts said, pointed to the use of timers. As of Wednesday the toll stood at 183 killed and 700 wounded.

Judging by the lists of those casualties posted at city hospitals, the victims were overwhelmingly male and mostly working age. Judging by the testimony of their friends and relatives, most were habitual first-class passengers.

If attacking the trains was an attempt to break the lifeline of Mumbai, then picking these compartments was a pointed attempt to cripple the men who stoke the city's roaring economy — bankers, stockbrokers, accountants, engineers.

"They actually wanted upper-class people to suffer this time," Ronak Gandhi, 21, observed. His brother, Chintan, 25, lay inside Lilavati Hospital in the wealthy northern suburb of Bandra, suffering from a broken arm and internal bleeding.

On Tuesday, like most days, Chintan Gandhi stood in the crowded middle of the first-class men's compartment on his way home from a software engineering course. He planned to finish the course by next June, his brother said; he was eager to start full-time work for the first time.

The Indian home secretary, V. K. Duggal, said a preliminary investigation indicated that the bombers had probably used RDX, a plastic explosive used by the military. He took pains not to point a finger at any particular organization but said the pattern of the attacks resembled the handiwork of known groups.

"From the way it has been conducted, we have our suspicions," he said in a telephone interview from New Delhi. "It's a bit early to name the outfit. Very soon Mumbai police will make an announcement. These are not new organizations."

P. S. Pasricha, the director general of police in Maharashtra State, which includes Mumbai, said it was impossible to rule out a banned Pakistan-based militant organization, Lashkar-e-Taiba, even as he cautioned that it would be “premature and misleading” to blame any particular group. No evidence has yet been presented linking the blasts to any individuals or organizations.

As forensic teams scoured the wreckage, Prime Minister Manmohan Singh vowed in a televised speech on Wednesday evening to be undeterred by violence. “No one can make India kneel,” he said. “No one can come in the path of our progress. The wheels of our economy will move on.”

The bombs exploited the frenetic rhythm of daily life in Mumbai, also known as Bombay, India’s financial and film capital. In seven first-class men’s compartments on separate trains, the bombs went off within minutes of one another along the Western Railway line connecting the commercial districts of south and central Mumbai to the spreading suburbs to the north. An eighth bomb exploded at a station on the line.

In the cramped quarters of Mumbai’s commuter trains, which carry more than six million passengers a day, it is customary for men and women to travel in separate cars. (“For ladies only, all the 24 hours,” a sign announces at the entrance to the women’s compartments.) No women’s cars were bombed Tuesday, and for the most part, women were able to get out of the trains relatively unscathed.

The carnage could have been worse if the bombers had chosen to hit the second-class cars, which are normally even more crowded, bursting with passengers.

By midmorning on Wednesday, with the wreckage mostly cleared off the tracks, train service on the line gradually resumed. The platforms were nowhere as congested as usual, but those who ventured out said fear would have to be conquered.

“If you have so much fear, you can’t stay in Bombay,” said P. Ratnakar, 36, a migrant worker from southern Karnataka State who comes to Mumbai every monsoon season to work in the city’s hotel industry. “Small things, small things are always happening.”

Neither state nor federal officials had much to say Wednesday afternoon about exactly how the attacks had been carried out. A. P. Sinha, the assistant chief minister in charge of home affairs in Maharashtra State, said only that it was plausible that explosives had been left in plastic bags in the train compartments.

Ajai Sahni, a Delhi-based intelligence analyst who tracks terrorist groups in South Asia, said suspicion fell on Lashkar-e-Taiba less on the basis of specific evidence than on the record of past attacks in which it has been implicated — 11 in all since 1997 in Mumbai alone.

The explosions fueled a war of words between Indian and Pakistani officials, with the Pakistani foreign minister, Khurshid Kasuri, calling attention to sagging attempts to negotiate peace, and the spokesman for the Indian Foreign Ministry lashing out in return.

“We would urge Pakistan to take urgent steps to dismantle the infrastructure of terrorism on the territory under its control and act resolutely against individuals and groups who are responsible for terrorists’ violence,” said the Indian spokesman, Navtej Sarna.

Pakistan has long maintained that it offers no more than moral and political support to groups fighting Indian rule in Kashmir.

Mr. Sinha, the state official, said that while federal intelligence sources had been alerted generally to potential terror attacks on houses of worship and prominent financial institutions, there had been no specific indication that the city’s transit system would be hit.

The police have been combing the city for clues, he added, but have not made any arrests or detained anyone for questioning. “We are not in a position to say anything,” Mr. Sinha said. “We do not have any idea of who was involved.”

There was little mystery about who was hurt. A list of dead and injured posted near the entrance of Bhabha Hospital offered a snapshot of Mumbai’s demographic mix: Gujaratis, Marathis, North Indian Brahmins, Keralites from the southwest. Of the 73 injured taken there, all but 4 were men, ranging in age from 19 to 76. All of the 22 dead in its morgue were men.

Among them was Krishna Kumar, a bank worker in his early 30’s known for his knack for fixing colleagues’ computer troubles. Mr. Kumar left the office of the Indian Overseas Bank about 5:30 p.m. on Tuesday, saying he planned to go shopping one evening this week to buy a birthday present for his son, who turns 7 on Saturday.

Mr. Kumar, a native of Bihar, in the east, was much like his co-workers, posted to Mumbai for a few years at a time from far and wide across India. No one knew how long they would stay here. Maybe another posting would come. Maybe they would one day return home.

“Some lucky fellows, they’ll be staying in Bombay,” said Ganapati Bhatt, a colleague and a native of Karnataka in the southwest. “Some unlucky fellows, they will be going where?” He looked upward and raised an open hand to the sky.

By nightfall on Tuesday, when they had not heard from the Mr. Kumar, teams of his co-workers began fanning out across the city. On Wednesday afternoon they found his body among the 22 at the Bhabha Hospital morgue. Mr. Bhatt said he could recognize his friend by the clothes he had worn to work that day.

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