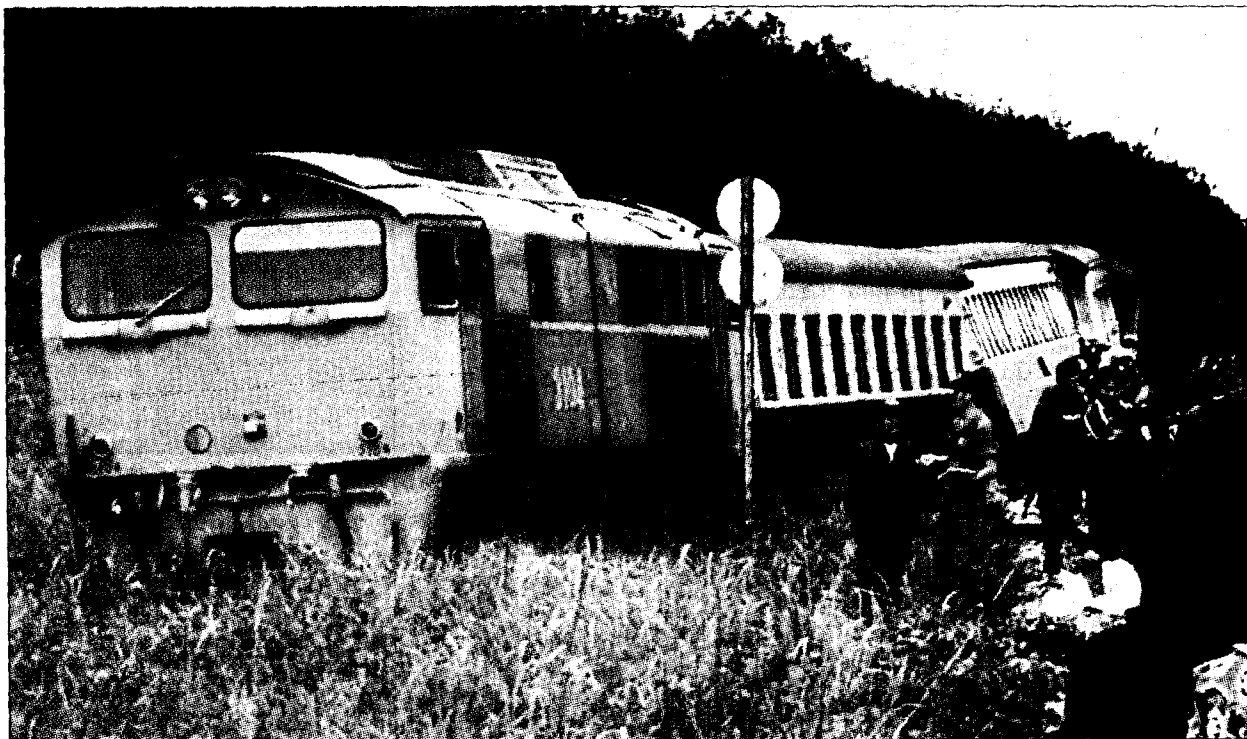


Southern Thai erupts

NEW WAVE OF ATTACKS LEAVES 7 DEAD IN RESTIVE REGION



Soldiers stand next to a damaged train after a bomb explosion at Sungai Padi district in Thailand's southern Narathiwat province on Thursday. A woman passenger was injured in the explosion. — AFP

The Nation/ANN & AP

BANGKOK, Oct. 27. — Thai Prime Minister Mr Thaksin Shinawatra today said the government will hunt down the attackers who raided 63 targets in southern Thailand, killing seven people and stealing a cache of weapons.

Last night's raids, carried out over two hours, represented one of the biggest shows of strength by Islamic separatist guerrillas who in January last year launched an insurrection that has cost more than 1,100 lives in the southernmost, Muslim-dominated provinces of Narathiwat, Yala and Pattani.

Three of the seven villagers killed were village headmen, Lt. Gen. Khwanchat Klaharn, the top security official in the region, told reporters today. Many of the 92 stolen weapons were shotguns that the government gave to villages last year for self-defence. The weapons are often kept by the village headman.

Provincial authorities have offered rewards of 20,000 baht (\$490) for the return of any weapons.

One suspected raider has been

Unholy alliance

MANILA, Oct. 27. — A top Filipino Islamic militant detained this week had consorted with two Indonesian fugitives sought for the first Bali bombings after setting up a terrorist training camp on his family's farm, officials said today. Ahmad Santos was the founder of the "Rajah Solaiman Movement", an outfit of radical Muslim converts linked by authorities to some of the worst terror attacks in the Philippines. Santos, along with Indonesians Dulmatin and Umar Patek, had sought shelter with the domestic Abu Sayyaf extremist outfit on the southern Philippine island of Mindanao earlier this year. Dulmatin and Patek are key members of the Jamaah Islamiyah (JI) regional Islamic extremist network and are believed linked to the 2002 bombings in Bali, Indonesia, which killed more than 200 people. — ANN

arrested, Gen. Khwanchat said, identifying him as Irafin Bue-nae, a student at an Islamic boarding school. The officer refused to give further details.

Mr Shinawatra, speaking at his weekly press conference, said the attacks involved "large-scale coordination", and vowed that the authori-

ties will arrest "many more" militants. He also said the government will set up a special agency to pursue insurgents and that he had instructed officials to take a more "proactive" approach in quelling the rebellion.

Meanwhile, intelligence has suggested that the terror campaign would be stepped up in deep South once Ramadan is over. Militants stepped up their assaults today, derailling a northbound passenger train with powerful explosives less than a day after launching raids in 63 locations and stealing at least 92 government-issued weapons.

Explosives have been planted on rail tracks before but yesterday's incident marks the first time a bomb has targeted a moving train.

The incident came as a shock to security agencies and set off growing fears that more public places would be targeted in the future.

Defence minister Mr Thamarak Isarangura said an intelligence report indicated that the insurgents were planning to step up their activities at the end of Ramadan. "We have been aware of their plans, but we're not able to cover all of the places on the ground," he said.

'Hindus only': Tradition or fundamentalism?

By Sandeep Mishra/TNN

Bhubaneswar: 'Only Hindus allowed'. This signboard on the right side of the famous Lions Gate of Jagannath Temple gives out the message loud and clear. And, be it the white colonisers during British Raj or the ex-PM Indira Gandhi, no one has dared flout the age-old rule.

Princess of Thailand Maha Chakri Sirindhorn, a Buddhist and Sanskrit scholar, too, on Sunday could see the 12th century shrine only from outside. This has only added to a debate sparked off following denial of permission US-born Pamela Fleig, who has embraced Hinduism, to enter Lingaraj temple at Bhubaneswar.

Whosoever is a Hindu, Buddhist, Jain or Sikh should be allowed into Jagannath Temple, irrespective of country affiliation, ex-CM J B Patnaik told TOI. He had, some months ago, made a plea in the Assembly for allowing foreigners, who have become Hindus, into temple.

Times are changing and dharmacharyas, priests, temple authorities should consider changing the existing practices. Bajrang Dal state convener Subhas Chouhan said it is a



Princess Sirindhorn

No entry for Thai Princess again

Bhubaneswar: Princess of Thailand Maha Chakri Sirindhorn on Monday had to see the 11th century Lingaraj Temple from outside, a virtual repeat of her experience a day before at Puri's Jagannath Temple.

On Monday, the princess's second day in Orissa, she also went around the famous Jain caves at Khandagiri and Udayagiri and the Buddhist heritage site at Ratnagiri in Jajpur. TNN

sensitive issue and all dimensions should be studied before taking a decision.

But temple priests say there is no scope for changing existing rules, which are being practiced for centuries.

Allowing anybody other than those being permitted at present like Hindus from undivided India is impossible, thundered secretary of Shree Jagannath Paitruka Jatripanda Samaj Ipsita Pratihari, adding that people of all faiths and countries can participate and see the presiding deities during the Rath Yatra every year.

Soumendra Mudali, a researcher associated with the rites of the Jagannath temple, says entry is being refused to foreigners, Muslims and Christians because it is believed they consume food prohibited by Hindus.

Gajapati Maharaja of Puri Dibyasingha Deb steered clear of controversy, saying, "We are bound by tradition. A change permissible only if the concerned communities and authorities agree."

State law minister B B Harichandan, too, was careful. "We have to study different aspects and consult those concerned before considering any changes," he said.

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