

**AN EXPERT COMMITTEE REPORT ON
BLASTS IN A POLITICAL RALLY IN
PATNA ON OCTOBER 27, 2013 AND
RECOMMENDATIONS FOR
STRENGTHENING SECURITY
MEASURES**

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PART I

INTRODUCTION

On October 27, 2013, Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) organised a mass rally in Gandhi Maidan of Patna which was attended by its apex leadership including Shri Narendra Modi, BJP's Prime Ministerial Candidate, Shri Rajnath Singh, Party President, Shri Arun Jaitley, leader of the opposition in Rajya Sabha and others. The rally that attracted a massive crowd witnessed seven IED explosions and post event recovery of eight unexploded bombs. This was an unprecedented event in India's post independence history where terrorists succeeded in planting such a large number of IEDs (which could well have been more powerful and devastating) in a political rally, presenting a new genre of threat that could seriously destabilise India. In a setting surcharged by competitive politics – looking for an opportunity in every calamity – powers that be have failed to fathom the seriousness of the impending threat and press into action an effective counter strategy. Should the terrorists even marginally improve upon their Patna performance, in the absence of an effective and imaginative national response, democracy in the country can get a body blow with no political party or leadership remaining safe enough to carry out their legitimate activities. The consequent destabilisation may seriously undermine the nation's internal security and political stability.

Considering seriousness of the event, it would have been highly desirable for the Government of India and the state government to appoint a high powered enquiry commission and enquiry committees, with wide terms of reference, to dwell deep into the matter and suggest corrective measures, both at policy formulation and policy execution levels. The need was particularly pressing as it has nationwide ramifications and the threats in times ahead are likely to proliferate exponentially. In a country known to appoint enquiry committees on most flimsy pretexts, it is unfortunate that the blasts were not considered a serious enough threat for ordering an enquiry. Further, the real strength of a nation lies in its 'National Will' and the government cannot become abettors to its erosion. A government perceived to be callously indifferent to national security and safety of its people does immense harm to National Will. In light of the

attempts made by terrorists to degrade Indian nationhood, threaten its national security, coerce political structures to submission, and endanger national stability, this report has been attempted with a limited objective of reconstructing the incident, reviewing the security arrangements and their efficacy, analysing Indian Mujahideen activities in Bihar, identifying the gap areas and recommending counter measures that could enhance national capacities to counter these threats.

Composition of the Expert Committee

1. Shri Ajit Doval, KC, former Director Intelligence Bureau.
2. Shri Anil Baijal, former Home Secretary, Government of India.
3. Shri Rohit Singh, Senior Research Associate, VIF.

Scope and Framework

The report broadly focuses on the following points:-

1. Sequence of events and blasts including damage potential of the IEDs.
2. Individuals/groups responsible for the blasts – their objectives, recent activities and areas of entrenchment and potential to undertake such operations in future. .
3. Some Key findings on the incident and recommendations for enhancing security arrangements during mass public rallies in wake of the upcoming general elections.

Methodology

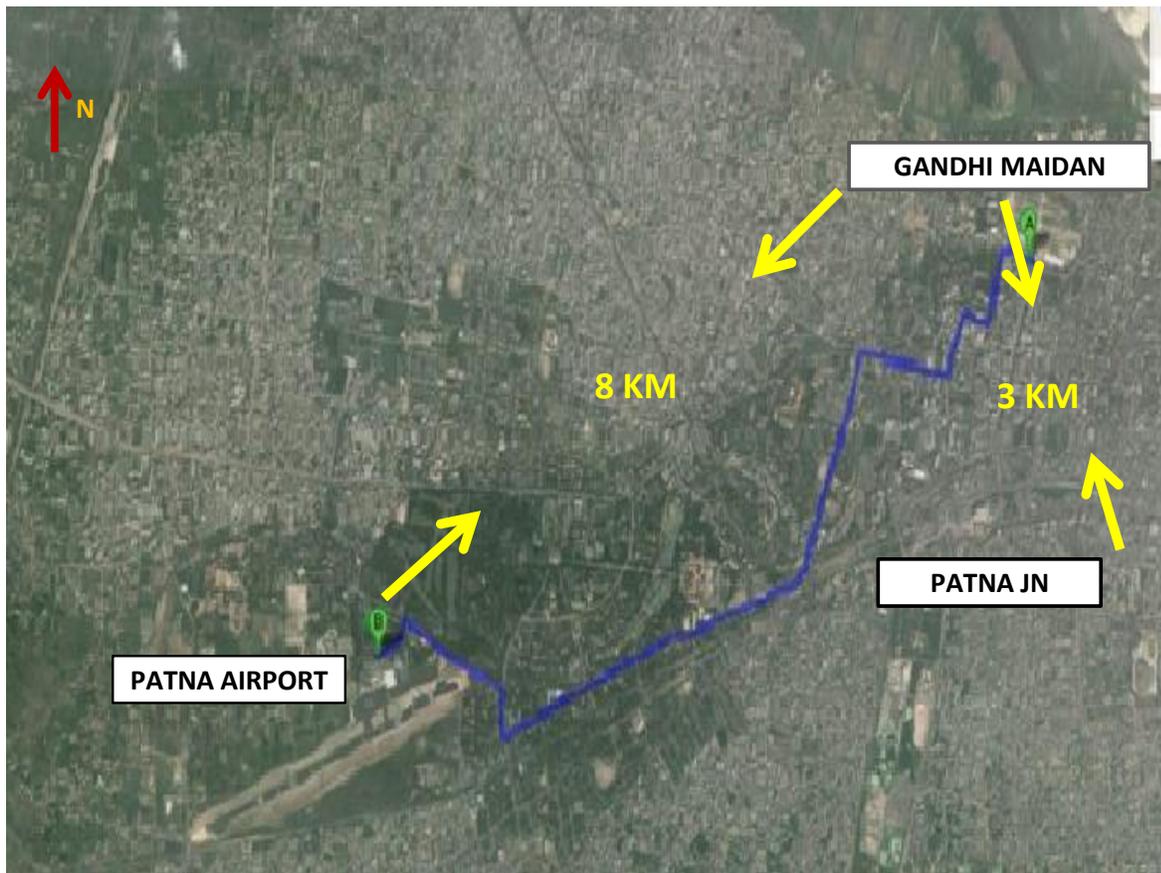
Being a non-governmental initiative, the report is based on open source material, physical examination of the venue, account of local witnesses who attended the rally, discussions with some scholars and experts on the subject. Available video footage of the rally was also meticulously scanned and analysed. Shri Ajit Doval also had a talk with Shri Abhayanand, DGP Bihar, who presented the perspective of the state police force.

PART II

DETAILS OF THE RALLY AND SERIAL BLASTS IN PATNA ON OCTOBER 27, 2013

Political Rally at Gandhi Maidan

The BJP had organised 'Hunkar Rally' at Gandhi Maidan, Patna on October 27, 2013. The rally had been planned six months in advance and it was announced that Shri Narendra Modi, Chief Minister of Gujarat who was later declared BJP's Prime Ministerial candidate would be addressing the rally. The Bihar state unit of the BJP had booked 14 trains and 3,000 buses to transport people and BJP workers from different parts of the state to the rally venue. A few steamers were also kept on standby at the northern bank of the river Ganga near Mahatma Gandhi Setu, the only road link that connects Patna with the state's northern districts. In addition, hundreds of people had made their own arrangements to attend the rally.



Gandhi Maidan

The venue of the rally, Gandhi Maidan is located at the heart of Patna city and is in the midst of its commercial hub. It is spread across an area of 62 acres. A three km long peripheral road runs around the ground and several important buildings are located opposite this road. All major political rallies, public congregations and state functions such as flag hoisting on the occasion of Republic Day and Independence Day are held at Gandhi Maidan. There are eight major gates or entry points which allow the entry of vehicles while several smaller gates provide access to pedestrians. A two ft wall with small railings on top delineates the outer periphery of the maidan and a walk way on the inner side runs parallel to it. On the outside, the space between the outer periphery and road is occupied by several hawkers and street vendors. A portion outside the Maidan is used as dumping space for some discarded vehicles and scrap material.

Assemblage of people at the venue

People had started congregating at the rally venue since the wee hours of October 27, 2013. Thousands of people had walked large distances on foot from the railway station, bus stand and other points on the outskirts of Patna city to reach the venue. Several attendees at the rally had started arriving a day ahead of the rally, some of them even spending the night at the ground itself. By 0900 hrs, a crowd of 50,000 had assembled at the venue. The flow of people increased as the day progressed. By daybreak, a sizeable crowd had filled the Gandhi Maidan and by 1200 hrs, the ground was teeming with people. At 1300 hrs no space was left inside the ground for people to occupy. By this time, people had filled the streets abutting Gandhi Maidan and had also positioned themselves on the roof tops of several high rise buildings overlooking it. The total estimated crowd at Gandhi Maidan and adjoining areas surrounding it is estimated to have been close to 5 lakh people. Various programmes and announcements at the rally began by 1000 hrs and by 1100 hrs, state level BJP leaders were addressing the crowd.

Rally timeline and arrival of VIPs

0200 to 1000 hrs	People arriving at venue since early morning from all over the state
1000 hrs	Commencement of the Rally
1115 hrs	State BJP leader Mangal Pandey addresses the gathering
1140 hrs	BJP leaders Rajiv Pratap Rudy, Shahnawaz Hussain and Sushil Modi address the rally
1200 hrs	Shri Narendra Modi's aircraft lands at Patna airport
1215 to 1240 hrs	Shri Narendra Modi's cavalcade moves from Patna airport to Gandhi Maidan
1245 hrs	Shri Narendra Modi is seated on the dais
1245 to 1330 hrs	BJP leaders Rajnath Singh and Arun Jaitley address the gathering

1330 hrs	Narendra Modi's speech begins
1415 hrs	Rally concludes with end of Modi's speech; crowd starts dispersing

Serial Blasts in Patna

A total of seven low intensity Improvised Explosive Device (IED) blasts took place; one at Patna Junction railway station and six at Gandhi Maidan on October 27, 2013 between 0935 to 1245 hrs.

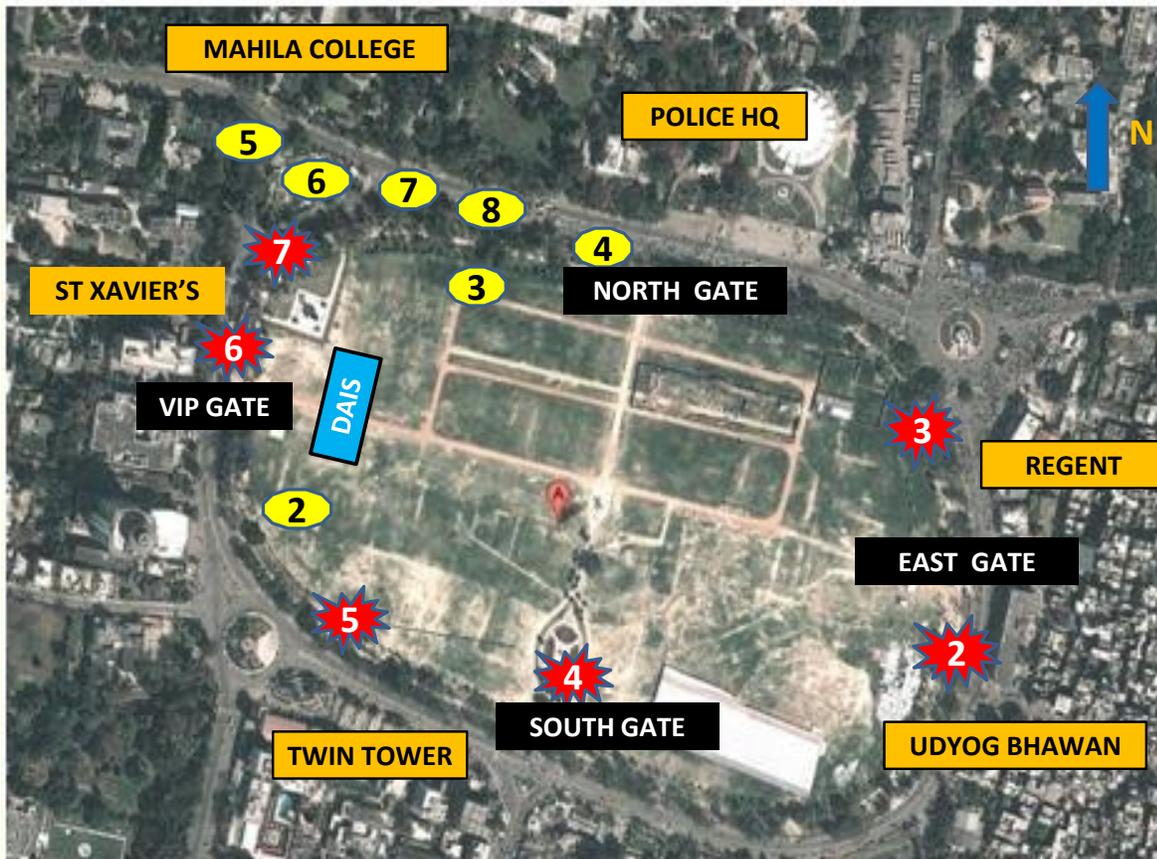
Casualties

Six people lost their lives and over 100 were injured in these explosions. Most of the casualties occurred due to splinter injuries caused by shrapnels. Out of the injured persons, 102 with minor injuries were discharged after being administered first aid on the first day itself while 32 others sustained more serious injuries.

Location of IEDs & Time sequence of blasts

S.No	Time	Location
1.	0935 hrs	Patna Junction (inside a toilet - Sulabh Shauchalaya near platform no.10)
2.	1140 hrs	Opposite Udyog Bhawan (eastern periphery of Gandhi Maidan)
3.	1205 hrs	Opposite Regent Cinema (eastern periphery of Gandhi Maidan)

4.	1210 hrs	Near Gandhi statute (inside Gandhi Maidan)
5.	1215 hrs	Opposite Twin Tower building (southern periphery of Gandhi Maidan)
6.	1220 hrs	Opposite SBI office (western periphery of Gandhi Maidan)
7.	1245 hrs	Children's park (north western periphery of Gandhi Maidan)



 IED blasts

 Unexploded IEDs

Recovery of unexploded IEDs

A total of 18 IEDs were planted of which seven exploded and eight were recovered from Patna railway station and Gandhi Maidan area from October 27-29 2013. Three IEDs are yet to be accounted for. (As per interrogation of suspects a total of 18 IEDs were assembled for the operation).

Location of recovered IEDs

S.No	Location	Date/Time of recovery
1.	Railway station (inside toilet on platform no.10)	Oct 27/0945 hrs
2.	Inside Gandhi Maidan (western end)	Oct 27/1600 hrs
3.	Inside Gandhi Maidan (western end) - detonated while being defused	Oct 27/1700 hrs
4.	Opposite Police Information room	Oct 29
5.	Children's Park	Oct 29
6.	Opposite Magadh Mahila College	Oct 29
7.	Children's Park	Oct 29
8.	Opposite Magadh Mahila College	Oct 29

Impact of blasts on the rally

Though a sizeable number of people were flocking to the venue from the Patna Junction railway station, it took some time for the news of the first blast at the railway station, which took place around 0935 hrs, to trickle out. The news of the blast appeared in the media only after 1100 hrs and that of the first explosion outside Gandhi Maidan (near Udyog Bhawan) broke out by 1210 hrs. These blasts did not have any major impact on the flow of people partly because of their enthusiasm and partly on account of their ignorance. Shortly after the first blast at Gandhi Maidan around 1140 hrs, organisers of the rally made announcements asking people not to panic and refrain from bursting crackers in their jubilation. High noise level at the rally, compounded by the loudspeakers, and brightness of day light reduced the sound and visual impact of the blasts. The second blast took place at 1205 hrs and by that time BJP leaders present on the stage at Gandhi Maidan had sensed that they were probably grappling with a serial blast situation at the venue. But looking at the huge assembly of people inside Gandhi Maidan and a large crowd outside still waiting to enter the ground, the leaders decided to calm the public by making announcements that the explosions were mere firecrackers going off. Four subsequent explosions from 1210 to 1225 hrs created some commotion but did not lead to any panic situation.

Even though people in close vicinity of the blasts had realised the threat and saw the dead and injured being whisked away by the police, they did not panic. The crowd was apparently highly motivated and attracted to the persona of Shri Narendra Modi. This very mass psychology could have led to large scale violence and public disorder if top ranking BJP leaders, particularly Shri Narendra Modi were harmed. The situation could have also worsened if all the planted IEDs had exploded. After the accidental blast at the railway station around 0930 hrs, the Police was making announcements asking people to remain vigilant as more explosions could take place in the city. According to some reports, these announcements resulted in the exodus of some people from the venue. By and large though, the initial confusion caused by the multiple blasts was maturely handled by the organisers who decided to continue with the rally as if nothing

untoward had happened. The police response of not over-reacting and quietly whisking away the casualties was also commendable.

Police Response

According to the Police, they began evacuating the injured from the locations where the blasts were taking place without terminating the rally. They specifically evacuated only the injured persons without affecting the movement of other people to and fro the venue. They claim that their clinical response to the situation helped in avoiding a stampede like situation as movement of large number of police personnel inside the Gandhi Maidan to check for explosives would have created panic among the crowd who had assembled inside. With blasts occurring at quick succession, the Bomb Disposal Squad began combing the outer periphery and areas around Gandhi Maidan for explosive devices.

Be that as it may, several eyewitnesses and those who were injured in the blasts disclosed that the police deployment outside the venue was thin and not commensurate to the situation. They added that no ambulances or Bomb Disposal Squad were pre-positioned outside the venue and several injured persons were ferried to the Patna Medical College and Hospital (PMCH) in private vehicles including on two wheelers. There obviously was an error of correct appreciation and advance planning. However, once the blasts started taking place, the response was fast and bomb disposal units, ambulances, rescue teams etc. rushed to the venue. It has also been reported that the police did not cordon off the blast locations leading to mishandling and loss of vital clues such as fragments of the IEDs. This criticism, however, appears to be misplaced. It is quite explainable that considering the size of the crowd and Shri Modi's speech being in progress, this would have been inadvisable. It would not have been physically possible to cordon off the scenes of blasts without heavy force deployment and possible use of force that would have compounded the situation. No explosion took place during the stay of Shri Narendra Modi at the venue from 1245 to 1415 hrs. The rally concluded around 1430 hrs but the police could launch a thorough search of Gandhi Maidan only around 1600 hrs after people had vacated the venue. A special aircraft carrying the Post

Blast Investigation Team of the National Security Guard (NSG) and a team from the National Investigation Agency (NIA), led by a DIG rank officer landed at Patna airport at 1830 hrs.

Post incident reactions

The blasts caused widespread resentment among common people in Bihar for perceived inability of the state administration to make adequate security arrangements for the rally. Some even accused the government of adopting a soft policy towards Jihadi terrorists to preserve their Muslim vote bank. Politicisation of police responsible for the incident was another common refrain. In more informed circles, there was a wide spread perception that the state government deliberately ignored security threats and desisted from making proper security arrangements due to its political animus against the BJP. The state government's indifferent attitude towards ensuring adequate security and protecting the people has been seen as taking political rivalry to a new low. There was no communal fallout of the incident and even Muslims by and large supported strong action against the terrorists.

There is ample evidence to infer that the state government of Bihar has been adopting a policy of avoiding action against extremist elements to buy peace with them. Most of it can be attributed to ill conceived political expediency and the rest to low capacity of the state to frontally tackle threats posed by the Jihadi groups and left wing extremists. In recent past, indifferent investigation and follow up action in Bodhgaya blasts by the IM and indifference of the police in questioning Yasin Bhatkal are illustrative. The government also is often in denial mode, even refusing to acknowledge existence of these threats in Bihar. Over the years, this has led to aggravation of the problem.

PART III

TECHNICAL ASPECTS & LIKELY MOTIVES BEHIND THE BLASTS

NATURE OF IEDs

The Improvised Explosive Devices (IEDs) used in the blasts at Patna were of low sophistication, used locally available ingredients and had low lethality. All the 15 IEDs (detonated and recovered) had similar foot prints and were apparently the handiwork of the same group. It may, however be underlined that even the low intensity IEDs using shrapnels in a crowded area and choked exit routes are capable of causing high degree of casualties.

Composition of IEDs

(i) Main Charge

The IEDs comprised approximately 500 gms of ammonium nitrate as the primary charge with a mixture of fuel oil. Ammonium Nitrate is used as the oxidizer to cause the explosion when it reacts with fuel oil which acts as the binding agent. These types of explosives are categorised as ANFO (Ammonium Nitrate/Fuel Oil) and are highly unstable. ANFO based explosives can be homemade or combined with manufactured emulsions, gel and slurry explosives and are primarily used in criminal activities. ANFO is available in grained, powdered or in pillled forms. Fertilizer grade Ammonium Nitrate (FGAN) is also commercially available for blasting and quarrying purposes.

(ii) Container

The IED were packed in small pipes of 8 x 4 inch size made of galvanised iron and packed with limited quantities of iron nails/ball bearings to act as shrapnels and maximize the blast impact. The pipes were elbow shaped and had a bent design. The iron containers themselves acted as shrapnels as the explosion caused it to fragment into pieces.

(iii) Power Source

Power supply to the detonator was provided by a 9 volt battery while 1.15 volt pencil batteries were attached to the analogue clocks used as timers.

(iv) Triggering Mechanism / Detonator

The IEDs were detonated electrically and an analogue clock was used as the initiator in each device. When the preset alarm timing is reached, release of output power or impulse from the clock initiates the detonator by completing the electric circuit. The detonation creates a supersonic shock wave within the main explosive charge causing it to explode.

(v) Placement of IEDs

Not much effort was made to conceal or camouflage the IEDs. All the IEDs were placed over the surface of the ground wrapped in loose plastic bags and covered by loose soil/mud. Few of them were covered by garbage material. Two days prior to the Hunkar rally, another rally was held at the ground by a different political party and apparently, litter strewn around the ground during this rally had not been cleaned. The organisers should have ensured the clearing of litter by local civic authorities.

Most of the IEDs were placed in the space between the outer wall and walk way in the outer periphery of Gandhi Maidan. Reportedly no anti-sabotage checks were carried out in this area that could have easily detected these devices. Going by past modus operandi of terrorists, it is estimated that the IEDs were planted in early hours of October 27 when it was still dark, each device being planted by a buddy pair- one planting the device and other keeping a watch and later covering it with garbage. It would have been particularly possible as there were no police personnel deployed to keep a watch on the venue. The DGP of Bihar, however, insisted that the terrorists came along with the crowd and planted the IEDs.

(vi) Impact of the blasts

ANFO is a low grade and highly unstable chemical which limits the impact of the blasts. It also has no incendiary effect to cause large fires or inflict burn injuries among victims. The intensity of the blasts was of a low scale with a fairly restricted blast radius. Therefore the explosions did not have the potential to inflict very large casualties. When the explosion takes place producing gases with high velocity, the shrapnels exit the IED at a high speed. The dispersal of shrapnels in close proximity of the blasts indicate that the release of gases were of low velocity indicating limited quantity of main charge, low compaction and use of commercial grade explosives.

(vii) Unexploded IEDs

Bomb disposal squads of the NSG and CRPF combed Gandhi Maidan for explosive devices from October 27-29, 2013. A total of seven IEDs were recovered in and around the Gandhi Maidan. The recovered IEDs which were subsequently defused failed to detonate due to faulty completion of the electric circuit. The wires between the detonator and the timer were either wrongly connected or the alarms were erroneously set. In addition to faulty construction of the circuits and placement of different components within the IED, ANFO based explosives at times do not have the desired blast impact due to faulty combination of various chemical compounds and fuel oil while preparing the mixture or due to the non-porosity of the chemicals.

INITIAL LEADS AND LIKELY MOTIVES OF THE PERPETRATORS

At 0935 hrs on October 27 2013, an IED while being activated inside a toilet on platform no.10 of Patna railway station exploded prematurely. The explosion was caused as the analogue watch timer was mistakenly connected to the minute hand instead of the hour hand. This led to completion of circuit within a minute instead of intended timing of one hour. Consequently, Tariq @ Ainul who was planting the IED sustained splinter injuries in his head due to the impact of the explosion. Another suspect Imitiaz Ansari was nabbed while attempting to escape from the railway station in panic. Ansari and Tariq had teamed up to plant IEDs at the railway station. Subsequent interrogation of Imitiaz

Ansari and discovery of some telephone numbers found in his possession led to the arrest of some other suspects from Ranchi in Jharkhand and other parts of Bihar.

Two First Information Reports (FIR), one at the Government Railway Police (GRP) station and another at Gandhi Maidan Police Station were registered on October 27, 2013. The investigation of both the cases has now been handed over to the NIA. It is confirmed from the interrogations and other early leads that the blasts were carried out by operatives of the Indian Mujahideen (IM), six of whom have been identified. They were operating from their bases in Ranchi but had extensive contacts in Bihar. The six prime suspects are:-

Tehseen Akhtar @ Monu – He is suspected to be the principal planner and co-ordinator of the Patna blasts. He is absconding and according to some informed sources has slipped into Nepal.

Imtiaz Ansari – Arrested from Patna railway station.

Tariq @ Ainul – Injured in the first explosion, he later succumbed to his injuries at the Patna Medical College and Hospital.

Haider Ali – He is believed to have led the IM modules for the Bodh Gaya and Patna serial blasts and is presently absconding.

The role of two other persons identified as Taufiq and Niman is being suspected in the blasts. Two more persons arrested for their role in the blasts are Tabish Niyaz @ Arshad and Uzair Ahmed. Niyaz, a resident of Sultanganj area of Patna, who reportedly acted as the local contact for the Ranchi module of the IM, has also been questioned. He assisted in carrying out a recce of the venue and providing other logistical support for the blasts. Niyaz was studying at a college in Ranchi where he came in contact with the other suspects. He was nabbed from Alaula village under Kalyanpur police station of East Champaran district. The other arrested suspect, Uzair Ahmed, a resident of Doranda locality in Ranchi, reportedly raised funds for the operation by collecting religious donations and zakat money. He holds a diploma from a polytechnic in Ranchi and worked as an electrician.

A money conduit has also been unearthed where money received through Nepal was being kept in some fictitious accounts and later being siphoned off to senior IM activists in Karnataka. This raises a strong needle of suspicion towards possible ISI link which is known to be using Nepal for funding terrorists and other anti-India elements through Nepal. This is also one of the favoured modus operandi of the ISI to finance anti-India elements.

Objectives / Motives behind the blasts

Interrogation of arrested suspects and other available evidence indicates that the six suspects from Ranchi had met in the first week of October to plan the operation. The IEDs were manufactured at a hideout in Ranchi and brought to Patna where the cells had to be fitted and timers of analogue clock watches connected. It is noteworthy that 27 crude bombs in a semi-finished condition were recovered on November 4, 2013, from a lodge in Ranchi, which was perhaps being used as a bomb-making facility. The six suspects travelled to Patna with the IEDs and checked-in at a local lodge. The IEDs were finally assembled at the lodge and subsequently planted at various locations in and around the Gandhi Maidan during the wee hours of October 27, 2013. It is learnt that services of a few local youth from Patna were utilised to plant the IEDs and for other logistical support. The local accomplices were paid amounts ranging from Rs 5-10,000/- each for the services rendered. Follow up investigations have also led to the arrest of some over ground workers previously affiliated with SIMI from Raipur in Chhattisgarh who may have played a role in harbouring the bomb-planters after the incident.

Analysis of the nature of IEDs clearly establishes that the IEDs were not capable of causing large scale casualties by themselves. However, had all the 18 IEDs gone off as planned, it would have caused great panic and chaos among the large crowd that had assembled in and around the venue. If the panic reaction was high enough to cause large scale exodus of people from inside Gandhi Maidan, it may have led to a major stampede. The placement of IEDs and timings of explosions (refer Part II of the report) demonstrate that the primary objective of the perpetrators was to create a commotion

leading to stampede and possibly retaliatory reaction on communal lines. The blasts would have deterred people from travelling to the venue and force those already present there to leave the venue. This also explains why IEDs were planned to be planted at the railway station as a large number of people were travelling by train to attend the rally. The seven IEDs that went off at Gandhi Maidan in succession of five minutes from 1140 to 1245 hrs occurred when the main speaker at the rally was travelling from the airport to Gandhi Maidan. By timing the blasts before the arrival of the main speaker on the dais, the perpetrators may have intended to cause sufficient chaos and heightened security threat making the police to force Shri Narendra Modi to cancel his visit. All these point towards a political agenda rather than conventional terrorist agenda that aims at causing large scale depredations. It will require a deeper probe to ascertain who were the real masterminds behind the blasts and on whose direct or indirect instigation the operation was conceived.

Capability assessment of the operating module

The technical analysis of the IEDs and the fact that at least 8-11 of them failed to detonate indicate the lack of expertise and professional training of the bomb makers. Expert bomb makers of IM such as Waqas, a Pakistani national who prepared the IEDs for the Hyderabad blasts on February 21, 2013 and Yasin Bhatkal were not available for the operation as then the possibility of the IEDs malfunctioning would have been fairly low. The use of low-grade explosives such as ammonium nitrate probably indicates the lack of availability of high grade explosives due to restricted access with contacts across the borders or deliberate use of commercially available explosives to deflect attention from state sponsors of terrorism.

Use of cylindrical boat shaped containers and pressure cookers as containers for fabricating IEDs is a favoured modus operandi of the IM. However, in the Bodh Gaya and Patna bombs, it used elbow shaped pipes to pack the explosive material. Elbow shaped containers are less effective due to their bent shape. The intensity of the blasts is further reduced by the use of low grade explosives such as ammonium nitrate which is essentially a fertilizer. Even some criminal groups active in Bihar and Jharkhand are

capable of manufacturing similar crude bombs which have been used in inter-gang rivalries. The triggering mechanism of the IEDs was also similar to ones used at Bodh Gaya. In both the cases, analogue clocks of Lotus brand manufactured by a company in Rajkot were used. The 13 clocks used in Bodh Gaya were purchased from a shop in Fancy Bazar, Guwahati where a customer had bought 50 such clocks in one transaction. It is quite possible that the clocks used in Patna blasts were part of the same lot. Assistance from local sleeper cells or unconnected individuals for monetary considerations may have helped some of the key players to escape to Nepal or other parts of the country.

PART IV
IM ACTIVITIES IN BIHAR

Concentration of IM in Bihar

With the exception of the Bhagalpur riots of 1989 and prevailing communal tensions in the aftermath of the demolition of the disputed structure in Ayodhya in 1991, communal amity has generally prevailed in Bihar. The radicals and anti-national elements also did not succeed much in recruiting people to their folds. But in the past decade or so, disturbing reports of recruitment and direct participation of young Muslim youth from the state in terror attacks have emerged. Consistent efforts are being made to radicalise Muslim youth by feeding into their sensitivities on communal lines. To achieve this end, anti-national elements are increasingly utilising the network of new mosques and madrasas that have come up along the Indo-Nepal border belt. Most of these madrasas adhere to the Wahabi school of Islam which is by and large alien to India and receive funding from Gulf countries. Yasin Bhatkal, who was one of the founding members of the IM (arrested on 28 August 2013 at Raxaul), operated out of a Wahabi seminary in Pokhara, Nepal. Bhatkal had made several visits to India through the India-Nepal border and had spent considerable time in Darbhanga recruiting Muslim men and facilitating movement of men and material from Pakistan to India via Nepal.

In the past seven years, 25 terror suspects from Bihar have been arrested from different parts of the country including Bihar. Due to its close proximity to Nepal, Bihar has emerged as a major nodal point for the movement of terrorists to India. The enabling environment also makes it convenient for them to lie low and seek refuge in the state, when they are being pursued by police teams from other parts of the country. On November 22, 2011, the Delhi Police swooped upon Mohammed Qateel Siddiqui in the national capital. A resident of Darbhanga, Siddiqui had opened fire on a tourist bus carrying Taiwanese nationals outside the Jama Masjid on September 19, 2010. Qateel Siddiqui (who was later killed in Tihar Jail) was a prized catch which led to the subsequent arrest of five other IM operatives from Delhi, Chennai and Madhubani.

Among the two arrested from Madhubani was Mohammed Adil @ Ajmal, a Pakistani national who was also involved in the Jama Masjid attack. Four arrests from Barh Samaila village of Darbhanga between November 2011 and May 2012 unraveled the well-entrenched Bihar module of IM operatives, Gauhar Aziz Khomaini and Qateel Siddiqui. In May 2012, Kafeel Akhtar was arrested by Karnataka police from Barh Samaila. Chief Minister Nitish Kumar had objected to his apprehension by the Karnataka Police without obtaining transit remand from a local court. The same month, Fasih Mehmood, a Saudi Arabia based engineer from Barh Samaila was also held for his linkages with terror activities. He was later deported to India. The geographical location of Darbhanga which is close to West Bengal is also ideal for terrorists to transit between Nepal and Bangladesh, which are used as transit points for travelling to Pakistan from India.

Since the arrest of Qateel Siddiqui, at least 13 IM operatives have been arrested in Bihar mostly from Darbhanga which led to the coinage of the term 'Darbhanga Module' by security agencies. Members of this module had either participated in the Pune German Bakery Blast, firing outside the Jama Masjid in 2010 or had prior knowledge of IM plots to carry out attacks in Hyderabad and Bodh Gaya, which were subsequently executed. Similarly in 2005, Madhubhani came on the radar of intelligence agencies, when a large number of unusual calls to and from the Gulf countries were being made from a 125 km long belt from Raxaul in East Champaran to Jaynagar in Madhubani. At the same time, over two dozen youth had gone missing from villages in Madhubani district. Nearly 500 calls were traced to three villages of Basopatti, Jaynagar and Laukaha alone.

IM operatives from Bihar which comprises young recruits from Darbhanga, Samastipur, Nalanda, Munger and Madhubani districts remained dormant till 2008 and primarily served in a logistical capacity for facilitating the movement of other terrorists between India and Pakistan through Bihar and Nepal. But after IM modules in Azamgarh (UP), Delhi, Beed, Pune (Maharashtra) and Karnataka were uncovered, the Bihar module was instructed to carry out blasts.

The socio-economic conditions prevailing in the Mithilanchal belt of North Bihar which encompasses the districts of Begusarai, Bhagalpur, Darbhanga, East Champaran, Khagaria, Madhepura, Madhubani, Munger, Muzaffarpur, Saharsa, Samastipur, Sheohar, Sitamarhi, Supaul, Vaishali and West Champaran is in a way making it easier for subversive elements to recruit impressionable Muslim youth from the region for terror activities. The Mithilanchal belt is particularly flood prone which inhibits setting up of major industries. Vagaries of floods and extreme poverty coupled with unemployment make the youth especially vulnerable to allurements and indoctrination by terror agents. A list of some important terror operatives including those of the IM who have been arrested in Bihar and outside the state in recent years is appended at the end of the report.

Present capabilities of IM in Bihar

The IM has displayed a unique ability to bounce back after every major crackdown. In 2008, with the arrest of nearly 40 of its operatives from Delhi, Uttar Pradesh, Rajasthan and Gujarat, the IM threat was thought to have been neutralised. But since 2009, IM modules in Karnataka, Maharashtra and Bihar were activated to carry out strikes across the country. Many members of these modules were first-timers and lacked sophisticated training or experience in carrying out activities. Most of them had not even visited terror camps in Pakistan and lacked sophisticated knowledge of bomb making. The recruitment of first-timers with no known criminal record also makes it easier for them to evade detection by security agencies for some time. The outfit constantly evolves its tactics especially modes of communicating and passing on instructions to avoid interception by security agencies. Though the IM leadership based in Karachi continues to relay directions to local cells in India, independent cells are free to select targets and acquire resources for executing blasts on their own.

Despite several arrests of IM operatives belonging to the Madhubhani and Darbhanga cells, the IM managed to carry out a series of low-intensity blasts at Gaya on July 7, 2013 and in Patna on October 27, 2013. The arrest of Yasin Bhatkal in August also did

not erode the capability of the outfit from planning and executing the Patna blasts. This indicates that there are other independent modules of the outfit which are still active in the state and retain the capability to strike. Absconding members of the detected modules may also have succeeded in merging with undetected cells and coalesce their efforts.

The pattern of planning and execution of the blasts in Bodh Gaya and Patna also reveal that the IM is increasingly relying on outsourcing the final act of bomb planting to non-IM individuals on monetary basis. This may be because of the shortage of foot soldiers where the slightly experienced operatives fabricate the IEDs and then transfer the explosives to hired operatives. It is however unclear as to whether these first-timers were over-ground workers or whether they were hired in a short time frame for a specific task. Either way, it demonstrates that the support base of the IM is still intact and that some individuals can be lured to participate in terror activities on financial enticements alone. With the arrest of a large number of IM operatives in and outside the state, the remaining ones have shifted base to Jharkhand. In recent months, IM cells have also been discovered in Biharsharif in Nalanda district and in Lakhisarai.

Ideology/Motivation

The IM ideology draws upon the Wahabi school of Islam which advocates a rigid, puritanical version of Islam. The IM mirrors the ideological aspirations of global Jihadist terror groups like the Al Qaeda and LeT to establish an Islamic Caliphate and introduce Sharia law in the Muslim world and beyond. Several of the initial members of the IM and SIMI have been students of Deobandi madrasas from Bharuch, Ujjain, Azamgarh and Saharanpur. But increasingly, the IM is drawing recruits from madrasas in states like Bihar and now even non-madrassa educated youth to its fold. In addition to unemployed youth from poor families, the IM also managed to recruit some highly educated persons including software engineers. Most of the recruits to the IM were brain-washed in villages by maulvis or won over in the Gulf countries where they were employed as labourers.

Linkages

The IM is primarily a creation of Pakistan's ISI and is chiefly aided by the LeT and HuJI-B to give an Indian flavor to terrorist activities in India and mask Pakistan's involvement in such activities. Its leadership comprising of the Bhatkal brothers is believed to be holed up in Karachi. Among other sources, the IM receives financial contributions from organisations based in the Gulf countries. Some of these organisations are the World Assembly of Muslim Youth, Riyadh, International Islamic Federation of Students' Organisations, Kuwait, Jamayatul Ansar and Chicago-based Consultative Committee of Indian Muslims. IM is also raising finances internally by collecting funds through religious charities and donations. While initially sourcing logistical support from LeT and HuJI-B, over the years, the IM has developed enough capabilities within India to conduct low-intensity IED blasts.

Potential to undertake future operations

Though degraded due to arrests and concerted police actions in some states, the IM base in Bihar has largely remained intact and is instrumental in raising new recruits and logistically supporting activities of other terror modules across the country. It also banks upon the old SIMI network to source new recruits or utilise services of first-timers for facilitating terror attacks. Some IM operatives have also been trained in the use of automatic assault weapons such as AK-47s as also hand grenades. Thus, the possibility of the outfit carrying out targeted killings, high intensity terror attacks, or even fidayeen attacks in the future cannot be ruled out. For undertaking such escalatory attacks, it may require sanction of its handlers who may pair IM operatives with hard core Pakistani operatives of the LeT. Some of the known absconding operatives currently driving activities of the IM are:-

Tehseen Akhtar @ Monu After the arrest of Mohammed Danish Ansari and Yasin Bhatkal, IM activities in Bihar are being led by Tehseen Akhtar @ Monu. A

resident of Maniyarpur village in Samastipur district, he had fled his home at the age of 10 years. Monu was a close confidant of Yasin Bhatkal and provided him shelter during his stay in Bihar. He is suspected of overseeing the execution of the Bodh Gaya and Patna blasts. He may have even planted some of the IEDs in Gandhi Maidan as per the disclosure made by those arrested in the case so far. According to some reports, he was even identified by Yasin Bhatkal as one of the bomb planters in Bodh Gaya on CCTV images, though Bhatkal had previously denied having any knowledge of the blasts.

Waqas Waqas, who is a Pakistani national and involved in the Mumbai train blasts of 2006, is an expert bomb maker. The IEDs planted at Dilsukhnagar in Hyderabad on February 13, 2013 were fabricated by Waqas.

Haider Ali Haider Ali, a resident of Aurangabad district of Bihar is believed to be the right-hand man of Tehseen Akhtar and personally involved in the Patna blasts. He has spent considerable time in Ranchi studying at a Polytechnic where he is motivated some other Muslim youth from Ranchi to take part in IM operations.

PART V**FINDINGS & RECOMMENDATIONS****FINDINGS****Preparations made by the organisers**

The date of holding the Hunkar Rally was declared on June 8, 2013, i.e., six months in advance during the BJP's national convention in Goa and was a matter of public knowledge. The BJP had obtained required permissions to hold the rally at Gandhi Maidan from district authorities. Shri Mangal Pandey, leader of the BJP's state unit had first written to the Bihar Police on May 23, 2013 informing them of their desire to hold a rally. A co-ordination meeting was convened by the Patna District Collector on October 16, 2013. The meeting was attended by representatives from the state police and the BJP. Requisite security measures being adopted by the police and the measures to be taken by the organisers were discussed. On the directions of the police, the BJP had hired the services of a private security firm to frisk people entering the venue. Senior BJP leader and national spokesperson, Shri Ravi Shankar Prasad was overseeing from the dais the preparations being made till about 0100 hrs on October 27, 2013.

Security measures undertaken by the State administration

Interviews with several eyewitnesses present at the rally, organisers and media reports have highlighted some deficiencies on part of the Bihar state administration in making adequate security arrangements for the rally. These include:-

(i) No action on advance intelligence alert

An alert pointing a threat to Shri Narendra Modi's rally in Patna was issued by the Intelligence Bureau in October 2013. Additionally, the Gujarat Police had established contact with Bihar Police to co-ordinate security arrangements for Chief Minister Narendra Modi and had alerted them about a high threat perception to him. An advance team of Gujarat Police also participated in Advanced Security Liaison (ASL) exercise along with the local Intelligence Bureau (IB) unit in Patna ahead of the arrival of the CM.

The Bihar Police, however, refused to participate in the exercise or sign the ASL report that listed out proposed security measures and points for action. The Bihar Police on their part assert that as per laid down rules and procedures, ASL is not mandated to be carried out for every VIP. Yet, given the nature of threat to Shri Narendra Modi and the fact that the IB team wanted them to participate in the ASL, their non-cooperation by citing procedural issues is a serious error.

(ii) Highly erroneous threat assessment

Nearly two-third of Bihar is affected by Left Wing Extremism which has some degree of presence in 31 of the state's 38 districts. The Bihar police also failed to factor in past activities of the IM and monitor their current activities which are sad reflections on their professionalism and competence. Given the magnitude of these security challenges and potential of a large crowd converging in Patna for the rally, a more realistic and professionally sound assessment should have been made. Additionally, the Gujarat CM being a high value target, sufficient arrangements should have been made to ensure smooth movement of his cavalcade and bolstering his proximate security cover which was not done.

(iii) Conduction of anti-Sabotage checks / sanitizing the venue

Several persons involved in making arrangements for the rally have indicated that no anti-sabotage checks or area sanitization drills were carried out by the police in the hours preceding the rally. As per standard operation procedures (SOPs), a thorough check of the venue for explosives including scanning by metal detectors and use of sniffer dogs should have been carried out in the morning before handing over the venue to the organisers. Anti-sabotage checks of the D area – which includes the dais and area in the radius of 300 meters from the dais was carried out but sufficient resources were not deployed to scan the entire ground and its outer periphery. This was due to the size of the ground and inability to comprehend the nature of threat from IEDs.

(iv) Force Deployment at the Rally venue

As per the version given by some organisers of the rally, no more than six policemen were present in Gandhi Maidan till the wee hours of October 27, 2013 – the day of the rally. As per several eyewitnesses, the police deployment which began in the morning was very thin. Though additional manpower was gathered from other police stations in Patna district, not much deployment of district armed police or Bihar Military Police (armed police reserves) were made. Locally available central forces such as CRPF were also not requisitioned for properly securing the venue and for crowd management. However, the Union Home Secretary in his report on the incident has stated that a total of 8,500 policemen were deployed for the rally in Patna including at Gandhi Maidan. This includes 10 SPs, 27 DSPs, 91 Inspectors, 1,305 SIs, 700 ASIs, 4,930 Constables, 550 Armed Police personnel and 710 women constables.

(v) Access Control

There are eight major entry points to Gandhi Maidan. Door Frame Metal Detectors (DFMDs) were placed at the entry gates on the western end of the ground which is the VIP entry behind the dais. People entering the venue from this end were also being frisked. However, DFMDs were not placed at the other entry points to the ground nor was any frisking carried out. The Police say that it was not desirable to check such a large crowd and frisking would have been impeded the free movement of people. As per the police, after 0900 hrs, it had become impossible to physically check each and every individual. The flow of people at the entry gates was so frequent and heavy that stopping them for frisking may have led to a stampede and people trampling over each other in the melee. There was also a perception that strict security measures would have been seen by the public as a deliberate act to prevent them from converging at the venue.

The buildings overlooking the venue were not secured nor were smaller entry gates to the ground adequately manned. CCTVs were also not employed to monitor the movement of people around the venue. It may be mentioned here that there are adequate numbers of equipment such as DFMDs and armed police force available with

the Bihar Police and these resources are optimally utilised for public functions such as flag-hoisting ceremony on Independence Day which are held at the Gandhi Maidan.

(vi) Traffic Management

Some reports suggested that vehicular movement was permitted on some portions of the road abutting Gandhi Maidan till as late as 1100 hrs on October 27. It is also not clear whether measures were taken to sanitize the route taken by VIPs from the airport to the venue or was vehicular movement suspended during the movement of VIP cavalcades, especially that of Shri Narendra Modi.

(vii) Structural shortcomings

Though a large number of IM modules have remained active in the state and the fact that several IM terrorists have also been arrested in recent years, Bihar Police does not have a dedicated anti-terrorist cell. Even the capability of its Special Branch to detect terror threats is fairly limited. The CM of Bihar is on record to have stated that the Bihar Police does not have a database of apprehended or active terrorists and therefore he requested the Centre to hand over investigations of the Patna blasts to the NIA.

(viii) Security consciousness

The state administration has adopted a lackadaisical attitude when it comes to comprehending security related threats in Bihar. This was apparent in the lax security arrangements made for the rally at Gandhi Maidan. Though no major terrorist incident has yet occurred in Bihar, the recent blasts at Bodh Gaya, which was the first of its kind in the state, should have alerted the police to expect similar strikes and the rally being a soft target was especially vulnerable. The Police do not have the requisite expertise, knowledge, training, intelligence and other technical skills to identify and pursue terror modules active in the state. A significant point to be noted is the fact that the Bihar Police has seldom apprehended terror suspects in the state independently. Almost all the apprehensions have been either carried out by Central Intelligence agencies or by specialised anti-terror police units of other states.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Patna blasts should be seen as a threat to Indian democracy and political stability of the country. SPG Act was enacted in 1985 on the premise that assassination of a Prime Minister in office could seriously destabilise India's constitutional polity and hence special arrangements should be made to protect the Prime Minister. The underlying spirit of the Act was not so much the persona of the incumbent as prevention of possible political destabilisation through acts of terror and violence. In May 1991, when Shri Rajiv Gandhi, a prospective Congress candidate for Prime Minister-ship in ensuing parliamentary elections was assassinated, it was felt that such killings could lead to political destabilisation. As he was the former Prime Minister, the SPG Act was amended in 1991 to provide security cover to former Prime Ministers and their families for a period of 10 years. The spirit of the Act was lost when in 2002 the NDA government further amended the Act to apportion political goodwill extending SPG cover to former Prime Ministers and their families even beyond 10 years. This step in effect, diluted the original spirit of the Act, de-linking it from its original objective of preventing political destabilisation. Interestingly, while the family members of late Shri Rajiv Gandhi continue to be covered under the SPG Act even 22 years after his death, no such cover was provided to the families of Shri Chandrashekhar, VP Singh, Narasimha Rao, HD Deve Gowda and IK Gujral. Intriguingly, while the number of SPG protectees have reduced over the years, the SPG expenditure from 2004-5 to 2012-13 has increased by nearly 400 %.

There is an urgent need to review the situation to co-relate security cover to the original objective of preventing political destabilisation, and not making it an instrument of political patronisation. Beyond the serving Prime Minister, SPG cover should be provided only to those threatened individuals, physical harm to whom could lead to political destabilisation. More appropriately, SPG should provide security cover only to the serving Prime Minister and alternate arrangements should be made for others including former Prime Ministers. There should be a special security classification for providing protection to high risk individuals, physical harm to whom could lead to national instability and they should be provided security cover

at par with SPG protectees. Even the former Prime Ministers and their families should be covered under this arrangement for a period not exceeding five years.

2. Factoring in the intelligence inputs, interrogation reports of arrested terrorists, open assertions made by radical elements and the contemporary political setting Shri Narendra Modi is the most threatened target. Any physical harm caused to him is likely to cause high degree of unrest and turmoil. The Government of India should urgently bring out an ordinance amending the SPG Act or empowering an alternate force to bring his security under a statutory cover. It may be mentioned that it is not only the personnel, equipment and logistics that gives an edge to the SPG but more importantly, it is the processes and procedures that have statutory backing which makes their protectees safer. Merely enhancing the numerical strength of the protection element will not ensure that.
3. In the light of the heightened threat levels and expected intense political activity during ensuing Parliamentary elections, Ministry of Home Affairs should issue special instructions to the states to follow new set of Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) during mass rallies, movements of political protectees by road/train/air, and security arrangements during night halts. These instructions may inter alia include anti sabotage checks, access control, vetting of people on the dais and close proximity to the protectees.
4. State intelligence branches have a very special responsibility in countering terrorist threats. The state intelligence units may create a special VIP security cell that works in close cooperation with the Special Task Force (STF) units and anti-terrorist cells of the state. The intelligence units may also collect ground level intelligence, develop the leads provided by the central intelligence agencies, create special interrogation teams, enhance their technical capabilities and keep a close watch on over ground supporters and front organisations of anti-national elements. The state intelligence may closely coordinate their activities with the SMAC, making weekly meetings of SMAC mandatory till conclusion of the parliamentary elections.

5. Multi Agency Centre (MAC) of the Intelligence Bureau may provide the state intelligence units with all relevant data concerning their states regarding terrorists operating in their area, their photographs and physical descriptions, over ground contacts and supporters, modus operandi, communication channels, collaborative linkages with organised criminal groups etc.
6. Physical security measures should be strengthened by the state government in the context of VIP security and management of political rallies/meetings. The measures may include mandatory ASL in respect of high risk political leaders (whose list should be prepared by the Intelligence Bureau and circulated to the states), anti sabotage checks using sniffer dogs/ metal detectors/ spectroscopic tests for suspected explosives, special briefing/training of police personnel deployed on VIP duties, covering of high rise buildings both en-route of VIP movement and venue of the rallies, deploying watchers/identifiers at vantage points during public meetings, plain clothed surveillance at railway stations/bus terminals/hotels and lodges etc. Contingency plans may be prepared by district Superintendents of Police to meet emergency situations. During major events, ambulances and fire fighters may be provided at the venue of meetings, observation towers erected at vantage points during mega rallies, armed police contingents kept in readiness for crowd control, unauthorised parking and unclaimed vehicles removed from the venue should all be covered under the special guidelines issued by the State Police Headquarters.
7. The district authorities should maintain close liaison with organisers of events and they may be persuaded to strictly abide by the laid down security protocols. They may also be asked to provide some reliable volunteers for liaison work, including for identification of workers and leaders at entry points close to the dais. The front enclosures of the public meetings are extremely important from the security point of view as also to prevent people from rushing to the dais. Designated volunteers should be made to position themselves at vantage points in these enclosures to help the police personnel on duty. As far as possible only identified persons should be allowed entry to front enclosures.

8. Laid down security guidelines by the police authorities regarding construction of the dais, providing specified clear space in front, erecting suitable barricades/alleys/pathways, special enclosures for media, parking arrangements, signs indicating entry and exit routes etc. should be strictly adhered to by the organisers.
9. During major political rallies, in addition to the rally venue, adequate deployment of police/reserve forces should also be made at entry points to the city, transit hubs like railway stations, bus stands and important landmarks including market places. Due to tight security measures around the main venue, terrorists may select these targets to vitiate the environment of peace and communal harmony in the country. Ensuring security of the people attending the rallies and the populace at large is a responsibility of the state therefore security agencies should pay adequate attention to these aspects too.
10. Election season is especially vulnerable from the security point of view as the political leadership engages itself in large number of activities that entails their public exposure and intimate contacts with the crowds and assemblies of people. Disruptive forces may find it easier to plan and carry out attacks during this period. It is therefore essential that the security establishment does not remain distracted and maintain a close watch on activities of anti-national elements and terrorists. The emphasis of police and other security forces all over the country should be to conduct pro-active operations to blunt the designs of terrorist groups and deny them time, space and resources to execute attacks.

APPENDIX**ARRESTED TERROR SUSPECTS FROM BIHAR (2005-13)**

Name	Date/Month of arrest	Place of arrest	Remarks
Haroon Rashid	2005	Siwan, Bihar	Belonged to the LeT
Mohammed Kamal Ansari	July 20, 2006	Madhubani, Bihar	Allegedly involved in the Mumbai serial blasts on commuter trains in July 2006
Khalid Sheikh	-do-	-do-	-do-
Mohammed Sabauddin @ Farhan	February 10, 2008	Lucknow, UP	Sabauddin, a resident of Gandhwara village in Madhubani was arrested for his involvement in the firing at IISc Bangalore in 2005 and attack on the Rampur CRPF camp on January 1, 2008. He was also probed for his role in the 26/11 case but was subsequently absolved of all charges in that case.

Mohammed Khalil	October 14, 2008	Lucknow, UP	A resident of Madhubani, Khalil was arrested for his role in the September 13, 2008 serial blasts in Delhi
Omar Madni	August 17, 2009	Delhi	A major ideologue, recruiter and logistician for the LeT, Madni is a resident of Basopatti village in Madhubani
Mirza Khan	2010	Purnia, Bihar	An Afghan national, Khan was arrested for terror links. He used to make safe passages to Bangladesh and Pakistan from Bihar.
Ghayur Ahmed Jamali	November 24, 2011	Madhubani, Bihar	Accused in Jama Masjid firing, Chinnaswamy stadium Bangalore and German Bakery Pune blasts
Qateel Ahmed Siddiqui	-do-	Delhi	-do-
Gauhar Aziz Khomaini	November 2011	Chennai	-do-

Abdur Rahman	November 2011	Chennai	-do-
Mohammed Ajmal	-do-	Darbhanga, Bihar	Resident of Karachi, Pakistan
Irshad Khan	November 2011	Chennai, Tamil Nadu	A resident of Samstipur in Bihar, he was arrested by the Delhi Police special cell for his involvement in various terror activities
Naqi Ahmed Sheikh	January 12, 2012	Darbhanga, Bihar	Various terror cases
Nadeem Akhtar Sheikh	-do-	-do-	-do-
Kafeel Akhtar	May 6, 2012	-do-	Was arrested by the Karnataka Police for his role in the blast outside Chinnaswamy Stadium
Mohammed Danish Ansari	January 20, 2013	Lakhisarai, Bihar	Danish was a close associate of IM co-founder Yasin Bhatkal