

Mosque blast, riot leave 12 dead in India

by UPI

HYDERABAD, India - A powerful explosion at an historic mosque in India followed by police shooting to control rioters left a dozen people dead and more than 50 injured Friday.

The Deccan Herald reported police in Hyderabad said nine people died when two bombs detonated at Mecca Masjid, and three more died when police first used canes then fired upon mobs in nearby Moghulpura. The protestors pelted stones at police, looted shops and burned buses, the Indian newspaper said.

Police regained control and politicians appealed for calm but it remained tense.

The centuries-old mosque is in a major tourist attraction. Hyderabad has a large Muslim population and thousands had gathered for weekly prayers.

The bombs reportedly were placed under a stone platform near the pool where men perform ablution and were triggered by a mobile phone. Police said two more bombs were found and defused.

M.D. Bait, director general of police said the platform acted as a "god-sent barrier," preventing further injuries. He said the explosives were "very sophisticated."

Chief Minister Y.S. Rajas Freddy called the blasts "intentional sabotage" and an attempt to divide Hindus and Muslims.

Andra Home Minister K. Jaina Freddy said a "foreign hand" may be involved.

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