

By JEREMY KAHN

**T**HE STREETS OF JAIPUR, INDIA'S fabled "pink city," ran red with blood in mid-May after seven bombs planted on bikes exploded in a crowded market, killing 61 people and injuring close to 100. It was the latest in a string of attacks to rock India's heartland in recent years. Most have been linked to Islamic militants allegedly supported by Pakistan.

This time, an unknown group called the Indian Mujahedin claimed responsibility for the blasts. E-mails sent to TV networks and a Hindu political party included videos showing one of the bicycles used in the bombings, its serial number clearly visible. But many security experts think the group is actually a front, a ruse meant to put an indigenous face on a foreign-based organization.

Among the chief suspects is Harkat-ul-Jihad-i-Islami, or HuJI for short. HuJI has been blamed for bombings before, including blasts in Uttar Pradesh and Hyderabad last year that killed scores. It's also thought to be tied to a 2002 attack on the American Center in Kolkata. If authorities are right about the group, they have a dangerous new trend on their hands. For HuJI is not based in Pakistan—India's rival and the source of most Islamist terror in the past—but in Bangladesh: India's other large Muslim neighbor. "Bangladesh is becoming a haven for transnational Islamists," says Brahma Chellaney of the Centre for Policy Research in New Delhi. "It is in danger of becoming another Pakistan."

The threat isn't entirely new; for years, separatists fighting India have used bases in Bangladesh's lawless and impoverished hinterland, slipping across the porous 4,000-km border at will. What is new, however, is that these secular insurgents are now being joined by Islamic militants, a trend that's accelerated since 2004, when Pakistan began reining in terrorists on its own soil under an agreement with India and under pressure from Washington. Deprived of their old bases, some of these groups—which allegedly still get aid from elements in Pakistan's intelli-

gence services—have now decamped to Bangladesh, where they've found a wellspring of recruits among the country's increasingly disaffected population.

Some of these groups, including HuJI, have also allegedly received protection from mainstream Bangladeshi political parties, including the Bangladesh Nationalist Party, which governed the country from 2001 to 2006. Col-

stream politicians have recently emphasized their desire for peace with India.

HuJI started out in the 1980s as one of many Pakistan-based militias fighting the Soviets in Afghanistan. It then began targeting Indian forces in Kashmir. In 1992, it set up a branch in Bangladesh (known as HuJI-B), allegedly, according to Indian security experts, with financial support from Osama bin Laden, and began calling for the creation of an Islamic state there. In addition to attacks against India, HuJI-B has been linked to dozens of bombings and assassinations in Bangladesh, targeting moderate leaders, intellectuals and journalists. HuJI-B reportedly maintains a half-dozen camps in the hills outside Chittagong and farther south.

In March, the U.S. State Department made HuJI-B a "specially designated global terrorist organization," noting that the group had signed bin Laden's 1998 *fatwa* declaring U.S. citizens legitimate targets. But the real threat posed is to New Delhi. India is home to millions of Bangladeshis, many of them illegal migrants, whose urban communities may provide comfortable hiding places for extremists. The Indian government has lately been trying to improve ties with the Army-backed caretaker government in Dhaka, and these efforts have started paying off, says Indian security expert Wasbir Hussain. "For the first time, the [Bangladeshi] authorities have said they will seriously consider India's claim that there are up to 200 terrorist camps in Bangladesh," he says. "Before, they denied this outright."

But many doubt whether Bangladesh's fragile government can take on the militants. "The state is getting weaker," says Suba Chandran of India's Institute of Peace and Conflict Studies. "Even if the government is

sincere in trying to stop Islamic militancy from spreading, I am not sure they are able to do it." If New Delhi applies too much political pressure—or attempts military action against the terrorist bases—it could further destabilize Bangladesh. Given the instability in Pakistan, the last thing India wants is two failed states on its borders. At least Bangladesh doesn't have nuclear weapons. ■



**CUT DOWN:** A mortuary housing victims of the Jaipur bombings

## TERRORISM

# A New Threat To New Delhi

The Jaipur attacks may have had a surprising source: Bangladesh.

Gurinder Singh of the Institute for Defense Studies and Analyses in New Delhi says that Bangladeshi politicians have found it increasingly useful to fan anti-India sentiments and to blame New Delhi for Bangladesh's economic and political chaos. Such rhetoric has lent legitimacy to anti-India terrorist groups. Singh notes that this stands in sharp contrast with Pakistan, where main-