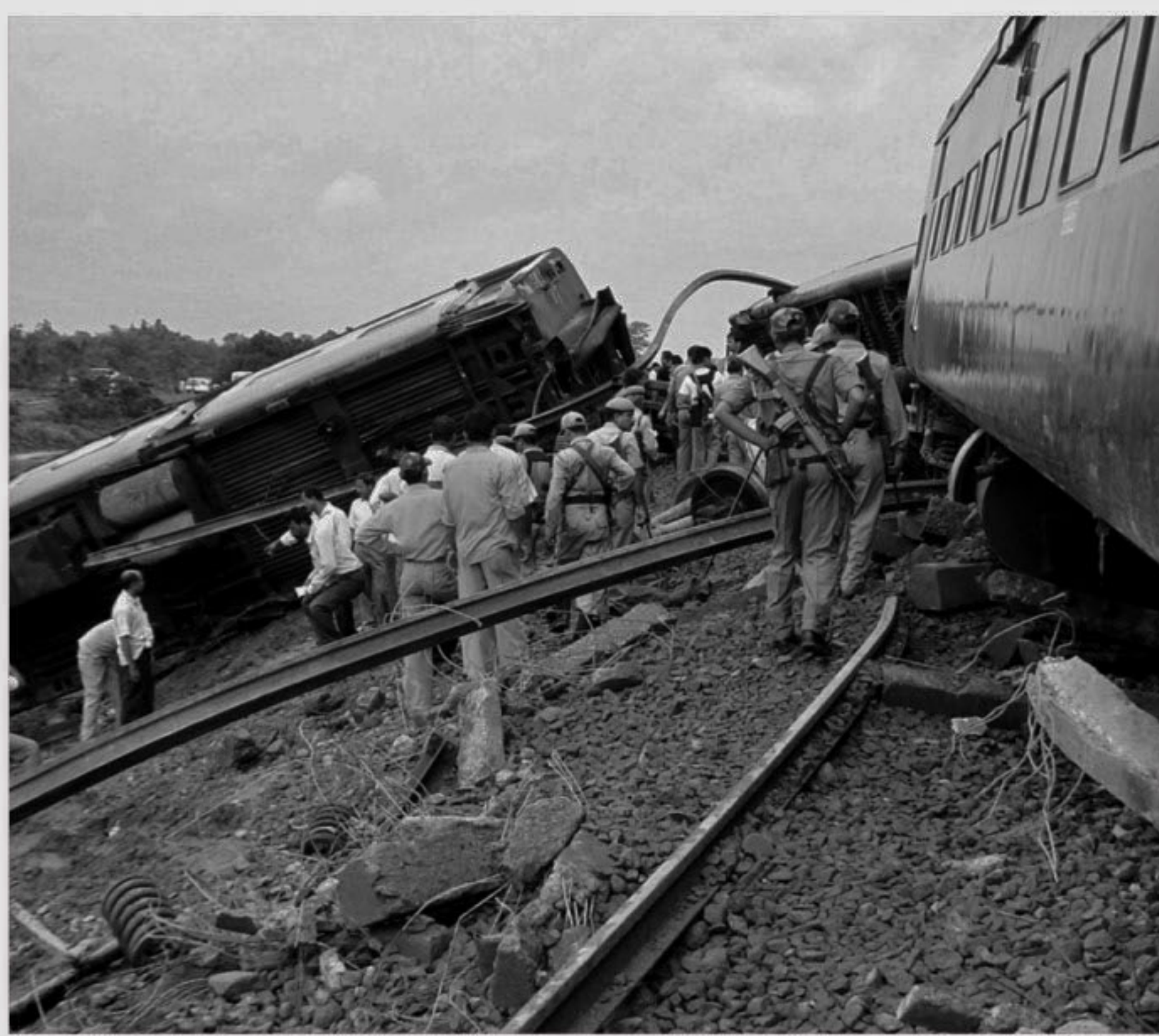


# Indian Maoists kill 7 during strike

BBC ONLINE

Maoist rebels have carried out a wave of attacks in India, killing seven people including five policemen. The rebels attacked railway stations, police stations and other targets in the states of Orissa, Chhattisgarh and Jharkhand, police said. They say officers killed six rebels. The violence came as the rebels held a strike in protest against the killing of a top leader last week. Cherukuri Rajkumar, commonly known as Azad, died in Andhra Pradesh state. He was number two in the rebel hierarchy in the state and a spokesman for the Maoists. Security forces say Azad died in a gunfight, but the rebels say he was killed by police in a "staged encounter".

**WAVE OF VIOLENCE**  
Police said the rebels had triggered off an explosion in the Kaunkonda area in the restive Dantewada district in Chhattisgarh, killing two policemen. Maoist guerrillas also attacked the house of a local Congress party politician and killed four people, including two policemen. The politician's son and an aide were injured, the police said. Six rebels were killed when the police retaliated during that attack, Dantewada police chief SK Kalluri said. Elsewhere in Chhattisgarh, rebels attacked paramilitary camps, and set fire to a police station in Kejhar district in neighbouring Orissa state. One policeman was killed during a firefight between the rebels and security forces in the Nitchipur area of Dhanbad in Jharkhand state.



Rescue workers inspect the wreckage of a train following a bomb blast in Babubeel village in the Kokrajhar district, some 300 kms from India's Guwahati yesterday. The bomb planted on railway tracks ripped through the engine and coach of a passenger train, killing one and injuring seven, officials said.

# US to give \$3b worth equipment to counter Afghan bombs

AFP, Kabul

The United States is set to deliver three billion dollars worth of equipment aimed at countering Taliban-made crude bombs used in the Afghan war, a US official said yesterday. Improvised explosive devices, or IEDs, have become the main weapon used against international and Afghan forces fighting to end an insurgency increasingly seen as bogged down in favour of the Taliban. The equipment was "at least doubling" current counter-IED capacity as forces did not have all they needed to take on an escalating threat, said Ashton Carter, US undersecretary of defence for acquisition, technology and logistics. The new equipment, including tethered surveillance blimps, heavily armoured vehicles and detection machinery such as robots and mine detectors, would arrive in Afghanistan in the coming months, he told reporters. Carter said the equipment would be accompanied by about 1,000 counter-IED experts, including laboratory technicians, intelligence analysts and law enforcement officials.

# Afghan corruption on rise

AFP, Kabul

Corruption in Afghanistan has doubled in three years since 2006, despite pledges by the government to clean up graft in one of the world's poorest countries, according to a survey released yesterday. Afghans paid one billion dollars in bribes in 2009, twice the value of those paid in 2006, according to Integrity Watch Afghanistan (IWA), a non-profit corruption watchdog. In a poll of 6,500 Afghan adults, one in seven said they had experienced bribery, with more than a quarter of households saying they had paid a bribe to receive a public service. It said corruption had become so entrenched that it threatened the multi-billion-dollar efforts of the international community to help end nearly nine years of current conflict, and rebuild Afghanistan after 30 years of war. "The findings of this survey show that corruption threatens the legitimacy of state-building, badly affects state-society relations, feeds frustration and the support for the insurgency," IWA said. Corruption also "leads to increasing inequality, impedes the rule of law according to Afghan standards, hinders access to basic public services, which impacts the poor most severely, and has a major negative effect on economic development," it said. Corruption has been identified as one of the major problems plaguing Afghanistan as it tackles a Taliban-led insurgency that has spread across the country and intensified in recent years. The United States and Nato allies are boosting foreign troop figures to 150,000 in coming weeks to escalate the fight in the Taliban's southern heartland and eradicate the insurgent threat in favour of civilian rule.

# Govt warns Kashmir youths over protests

AFP, Srinagar

The Indian government yesterday appealed for parents in Kashmir to keep their teenage sons indoors after the deaths of several young men in violent protests over the last month. At least 15 people have died in separate incidents as security forces opened fire to break up angry demonstrations held across the Muslim-majority Kashmir valley. Each death has triggered further violence despite appeals for calm from the state's Chief Minister Omar Abdullah. Teenagers and young men have often been among those throwing stones at security forces during the rallies.

# UN WAR PROBE Lankan minister on 'hunger strike'

AFP, Colombo

A Sri Lankan cabinet minister yesterday said he was on a hunger strike outside the UN office in Colombo to protest against a panel set up to probe alleged rights abuses during the island's civil war. Housing Minister Wimal Weerawansa, who led protests outside the United Nations building earlier this week, said he was prepared to fast to the death to protect the honour of the military. "This (UN panel) is a plan by the UN to produce our military before a war crimes tribunal," Weerawansa said to a few dozen cheering supporters. "We won't let that happen," he added. Hunger strikes are often used in Sri Lanka to attract publicity but are rarely followed for long. Buddhist monks chanted blessings as Weerawansa sat down on a makeshift stage outside the UN compound to start his fast. He urged people to take part in protests across the island to pressure UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon to dissolve the panel. Ban named the three-member panel last month to advise on "accountability issues" during the war between government forces and the Tamil Tiger separatists, which ended in May last year. The protests against the UN are widely seen as having the tacit support of the government.

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