

India police: New Delhi terror plot foiled
By The Associated Press
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NEW DELHI Police said Friday that they foiled a terror attack by a Kashmiri rebel group that was planning to target India's capital during celebrations of a major Hindu festival next week.

The arrest this week of a suspected agent from Kashmir's biggest rebel group, Hizb-ul Mujahedeen, led authorities to a hotel in Delhi's old quarter, where an assault rifle, several grenades and plastic explosives were discovered, said S. N. Srivastava, a senior Delhi police official.

Srivastava said the attack appeared to be a plot to avenge the recent hanging of Mohammed Afzal Guru, a Kashmiri militant who was convicted of involvement in a 2001 attack on India's Parliament that left 14 people dead.

The suspected agent, identified as Syed Liaqat Shah, was arrested Wednesday in a town along the Nepalese border following a tip, Srivastava told reporters. He said Shah told police the weapons were intended for an attack in New Delhi around the time of the popular Indian festival of Holi on Wednesday.

Shah told police he flew from Pakistan to Nepal's capital, Katmandu, and then traveled by road to the India-Nepal border, Srivastava said.

Srivastava said Shah was instructed by his handlers in Pakistan to tear up his Pakistani passport upon reaching Katmandu.

"He was told to destroy his passport so that all traces of Pakistani involvement are destroyed," Srivastava said.

India has long accused Pakistan of arming and training Islamic militants and unleashing them into India to attack government forces and other targets — a charge Islamabad denies.

Kashmir has been wracked by more than two decades of separatist violence. While militant attacks have decreased dramatically in recent years, Kashmir has faced weeks of protests since Guru's hanging last month in a New Delhi prison.

Many Kashmiris do not believe Guru received a fair trial.

The Hizb-ul Mujahedeen is one of more than a dozen militant groups that have been fighting Indian forces since 1989 seeking independence for Kashmir, or its merger with neighboring Pakistan.

Since their independence from Britain in 1947, India and Pakistan have fought two of their three wars over control of Kashmir, a territory claimed by both in its entirety.

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