

Terror attack on Kashmir tourists kills 26

Gunmen open fire on holidaymakers at resort in disputed territory, in worst civilian attack in years

By Samaan Lateef in Mumbai

TERRORISTS sprayed bullets into crowds of tourists in Indian-controlled Kashmir, killing at least 26 people in the worst attack on civilians in the area for years.

The ambush unfolded at Baisaran, a scenic resort near Pahalgam known for its pine-clad hills and sweeping valleys. It draws in thousands of visitors from across India and abroad every year.

Holidaymakers were wandering in a forest-covered valley when gunmen in military fatigues opened fire with automatic rifles from three directions, eye-

witnesses told *The Telegraph*. They said the attackers in some cases singled out men before killing them.

Omar Abdullah, the region's chief minister, said the assault was "much larger than anything we've seen directed at civilians in recent years." He added: "The death toll is still being ascertained, so I don't want to get into those details."

A senior police officer told *The Telegraph*: "At least 26 tourists are dead and all of them are men. The injured have been shifted to different hospitals."

Police blamed the attack on militants opposed to Indian rule, describing it as a calculated strike against soft civilian targets.

Videos taken after the attack show bodies lying motionless, family members crying out in despair, and survivors searching for loved ones in despair.

"Several armed men with faces cov-



Paramedics carry a wounded tourist after the attack at Pahalgam

ered suddenly appeared from the forest and began firing indiscriminately into the air, it was deafening. People screamed and started running away in

panic. But they rounded us up and then started shooting the men, one after another," said a survivor. "It was like watching a nightmare."

One image, now widely shared on social media, captures the horror: a young bride sits stunned beside the bloodied body of her husband. "I was having snacks and my husband was sitting beside me. A man came and shot at him," she said in a video.

Another survivor, whose businessman husband Manjunath Rao was shot in front of her, said: "They asked for our names. When I begged them to spare us, they shot my husband in the head. I screamed, 'Kill me too,' and one of them said, 'Ask Modi to do that.'"

One tourist, who was shot in the leg and is now recovering in hospital, said he saw "around a dozen bodies" scattered across the valley. "The gunmen were firing from behind bushes - there

was no warning, just screams and gunfire."

After the attack, security forces quickly cordoned off the area and launched a manhunt for the assailants. The injured and dead were transported down the rugged hillsides in tractors and on all-terrain vehicles.

Narendra Modi, India's prime minister, condemned the assault as a "terror attack" and vowed retribution. "Those behind this heinous act will be brought to justice," he said in a statement.

Since 1989, Kashmir has faced a separatist insurgency that has cost thousands of lives. The area is claimed in full by both India and Pakistan, though each country controls only part of the territory.

Many Muslim Kashmiris in the Indian-controlled part of the region have sought independence or integration with Pakistan.

'There was no warning, just screams and gunfire'



Delhi beloved JD Vance with his wife Usha - who is the daughter of Indian immigrants - and their three children, visit Narendra Modi, the Indian Prime Minister, at his residence in New Delhi. The US vice-president, who spent four days with his family in the country, has offered to sell American F-35s to India to replace its Russian fighter jets. The US vice-president pledged to boost sales of defence and energy equipment to India and said ties between Washington and New Delhi would shape the century.