

Sikh party plans to send suicide squads to shrine

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NEW DELHI (Reuter) — The Sikh Akali Dal party will renew agitation in Punjab next week by sending unarmed suicide squads to try to force Indian troops to leave the Golden Temple in Amritsar, the Press Trust of India news agency reported yesterday.

The decision was made in the Punjab state capital of Chandigarh by a committee of 11 Akali Dal officials who took over the party after the arrest of several of its leaders in recent weeks, PTI said.

The Akali Dal has led a campaign for religious and political concessions for Sikhs for nearly two years. Growing sectarian violence accompanied the campaign and last month the Indian army attacked the Golden Temple, the Sikhs' holiest shrine, to crush extremists based there. About 1,000 extremists and 90 troops died.

The party decided to send "Shaheed Jathas," groups of would-be martyrs, to the Temple after it had repeatedly called for army forces to leave it. Shaheed means martyr.

The army has said it will withdraw from Punjab only when all Sikh extremists fighting a guerrilla war for a separate state have been detained and their arms seized.

Meanwhile, PTI said extremists killed a woman early yesterday in a village near Amritsar.

Violence also flared in two north-eastern states where two people died and a local politician was seriously

injured on Saturday, the agency said.

The deaths occurred in Tripura State when police opened fire to stop a clash between supporters of Prime Minister Indira Gandhi's Congress (I) Party and the state's ruling Marxist party.

And a district leader of the Congress (I) was ambushed in northeastern Assam State and shot through the abdomen, PTI said.

Assamese leaders have launched a campaign to force the eviction of large numbers of mainly Moslem settlers from the state where about 3,000 people died in ethnic unrest last year.

In the northern border state of Jammu and Kashmir, officials said yesterday that security at Indian airports had been tightened and more than 250 people arrested after the hijacking of an Indian airliner to Pakistan last week.

Police in the state capital of Srinagar said more than 250 people, many of them suspected Sikh extremists, had been rounded up in the state in the past two days.

The Himalayan region bordering Pakistan was quiet after a curfew was reimposed and paramilitary troops redeployed during the weekend to disperse demonstrations against the firing of the state's Chief Minister Farouq Abdullah, they said.

In New Delhi, officials said a Government white paper on the Golden Temple assault was expected to be released today.