

Sikh temples reopened as military eases grip

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NEW DELHI (Reuter) — Most curfew restrictions were lifted, travel bans were relaxed and all but two Sikh shrines were reopened yesterday as life in India's troubled Punjab state slowly returns to normal.

But security forces continued their crackdown on Sikh militants. Authorities arrested 27 more suspected extremists and hunted others who threw a bomb in a cinema in neighboring Haryana state, injuring three people, police reported.

Government sources estimate about 4,500 people have been rounded up but say some top extremists are still at large.

A Government spokesman said that all Sikh temples except Amritsar's Golden Temple, the religion's holiest shrine, and a place of worship at Muktsar in western Punjab, had been ordered to reopen.

Many temples were shut two weeks ago while the army searched for suspects and weapons.

The spokesman said night curfews in Punjab were lifted except in

Amritsar, where about 1,000 people were killed on June 6 when the temple complex — a haven for Sikh extremists blamed for the deaths of hundreds — was stormed by soldiers.

Bans on the assembly of four or more people and the carrying of weapons in public places were still in force in the state.

Civilian flights into Amritsar, suspended for the past three weeks, were expected to resume today, but Punjab remained off limits to foreigners.

The Government refused a demand yesterday by the five highest priests of the Sikh religion to reopen the Golden Temple, which was severely damaged in the fighting.

The high priests, known as the Panj Pyares (the Five Loved Ones), called on the army to withdraw immediately from the temple so that repairs could start.

Prime Minister Indira Gandhi, continuing her joint meetings with Sikh and Hindu groups from around India, said there was nothing to be proud of in the army's success. "It was a painful decision," she said.