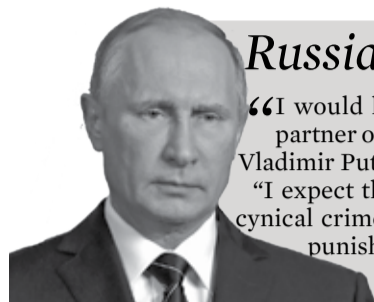




India: We stand with you

Narendra Modi, the leader of neighbouring India, said his thoughts are with the bereaved families.

"There is no place for such barbarism in our region," he tweeted. "India stands in solidarity with the people of Sri Lanka."



Russia: 'Cynical crime'

"I would like to reassert that Russia has been and remains a reliable partner of Sri Lanka in combating the threat of international terrorism," Vladimir Putin said in a Kremlin statement.

"I expect that the masterminds and perpetrators of such a heinous and cynical crime committed in the midst of Easter celebrations will get the punishment they deserve."

Who did it?

There was no immediate claim of responsibility, and Prime Minister Ranil Wickremesinghe declined to identify any suspected perpetrators.

At least three people have been arrested in connection with the attacks, police said, without providing further details.

The island nation has suffered deadly militant attacks for years, especially by ethnic Tamil militants during a decades-long civil war that ended in 2009 when Sri Lankan forces crushed the insurgency.

In recent years, there have been clashes between the majority Sinhalese Buddhist community and minority Muslims, and in March last year the government imposed a 12-day state of emergency to quell anti-Muslim riots.



Sri Lankan security personnel walk through debris following an explosion in St Sebastian's Church in Negombo

Bomber queued at buffet



Sri Lankan security personnel walk next to dead bodies on the floor amid blast debris at St. Anthony's Shrine

- Powerful explosions struck in quick succession at three hotels in the capital Colombo.

- The Cinnamon Grand was hit at around 8:30 am (0300 GMT), and the high-end Shangri-La soon after at 9:05 am.

- Three churches were also targeted in that wave of blasts: Colombo's historic St Anthony's Shrine, the St Sebastian's church in the town of Negombo -- north of the capital -- and the Zion Church in the east-coast town of Batticaloa

- Hours later, there were two more blasts -- one of them at another Colombo hotel. At least two of the eight were carried out by suicide bombers

- There was no immediate claim of responsibility

- A Sri Lankan foreign ministry official said there were 27 bodies of suspected foreign nationals, while the police said at least 35 of the dead were foreigners

- Eight people have been arrested in connection with the attack, Prime Minister Ranil Wickremesinghe said

The country's police chief warned top officers 10 days ago of possible suicide bomb attacks on churches and the Indian high commission by the National Thowheeth Jama'ath (NTJ), a radical group in Sri Lanka. He cited reports by a "foreign intelligence agency", according to the documents.



Relatives of a victim of the explosion at St. Anthony's Shrine, Kochchikade church react at the police mortuary in Colombo, Sri Lanka