

Pune explosion suspect sent to police custody

17 were killed in German Bakery attack

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Mumbai: A Mumbai court Tuesday remanded Abdul Samad Bhatkal, a suspect in the Pune bombing that killed 17 people on February 13, to police custody till June 1 in an arms case.

Bhatkal, 23, who was caught at Mangalore's Bajpe International Airport in Karnataka on Monday after he arrived on a flight from Dubai, was produced before a metropolitan magistrate in Mazagaon yesterday afternoon, according to an official.

Seeking his remand, the Maharashtra Anti-Terrorist Squad (ATS) said that in August last year police had effected an arms seizure in Byculla, south Mumbai. Bhatkal had allegedly supplied the consignment.

Connection

Three other people had been arrested in connection with the offence under the Arms Act, police said.

Bhatkal, an Indian Mujahideen (IM) operative, is also considered a suspect in the February 13 German Bakery bombing in Pune.

Among other things, Bhatkal is suspected of having planted the bomb which ripped through the German Bakery, killing 17 people, including foreign nationals.

Contract killer

He is a resident of Bhatkal town of North Kanara district of Karnataka and is believed to be a close associate of IM founders Riyaz Bhatkal and Iqbal Bhatkal.

Believed to be a contract killer, Bhatkal is also expected to throw more light on the Pune blast and other terror acts elsewhere in the country.

Earlier in Delhi, Union Home Minister P. Chidambaram confirmed Bhatkal's arrest and said that Pune police and Maharashtra ATS have succeeded in identifying and nabbing the prime suspect in the Pune blast.

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