

# 26/11 made in Pakistan, says judge

Kasab Found Guilty; Saeed, Lakhvi and 18 More Indicted; Accused Indians Acquitted; Sentence Today

Our Political Bureau  
MUMBAI

PAKISTANI Ajmal Amir Kasab has been found guilty on all 86 counts, including waging war against India, in the 26/11 terrorist attacks case.

However, Sabauddin Ahmed and Fahim Ansari, accused of conspiring with Kasab by the prosecution — by allegedly preparing maps of terror targets and handing them over to Pakistan-based Lashkar-e-Toiba for execution — were acquitted of all charges for want of enough evidence. The state will appeal against the acquittal.

Special anti-terror court judge M L Tahaliyani announced the verdict here on Monday after examining 3,192 pages of evidence and 658 witnesses in 271 working days. He will pronounce the punishment on Tuesday. Kasab, who hails from Pakistan's Faridkot faces the prospect of a death penalty.

The court held that 20 of the wanted accused, including LeT founder Hafiz Saeed, operations chief Zaki-ur-Rehman Lakhvi and Abu Hamza, were involved in 26/11 conspiracy.

Kasab and nine terrorists who were killed were charged with killing 166 people, including 25 foreigners and injuring 304 others at the instance of Lashkar-e-Toiba.

Dressed in a white kurta-pyjama, Kasab stood silently when the charges



Special public prosecutor Ujwal Nikam outside the special court at Arthur Road Jail in Mumbai on Monday — AP

read out to him. He stared blankly at the ground when pronounced guilty.

The court on Tuesday will hear arguments by the defence and prosecution on the quantum of sentence for 22-year-old Kasab, who was captured alive from the Girgaum-Chowpatty police

barricade following an encounter after he and his accomplice Abu Ismael had killed several people at Chhatrapati Shivaji Terminus, in and outside Cama

Hospital and Metro Junction. Pronouncing the verdict, judge Tahaliyani told Kasab in Hindi that the charge against him for waging war against India was found to be true.

While holding the terrorist personally accountable for killing innocent people at CST and Cama Hospital, the court also pronounced Kasab guilty of abetting murder at other scenes of the attacks where his accomplices perpetrat-

ed mass killing. Kasab was held guilty under provisions of Arms Act, Unlawful Activities Prevention Act, Explosives Act and the Railway Act. The trial, the fastest in a terror case in India, had commenced on May 8 in a special court set up at Arthur Road Jail which recorded 3,192 pages of evidence after examining 658 witnesses on 271 working days.

Thirty witnesses had identified in court Kasab as the man who had opened fire at them. Stating that 26/11 attack was not a simple act of murder, Tahaliyani said, "it was part of a larger conspiracy to wage war against the nation." The judge observed that terrorists' handlers from Pakistan were directing them, asking them to "fight until death" and not allow themselves to be caught alive.

The court found that 20 of the 35 absconding accused named in the chargesheet, including Saeed and Lakhvi were involved in the conspiracy. The court had issued non-bailable warrants against 27 of them during the trial which were handed over to the Interpol, but none was arrested. The acquittal of the two Indians — Ansari and Ahmed — came as a jolt for the prosecution. The prosecution had claimed that Ansari had prepared maps of terror targets and handed it over to Sabauddin Ahmed in Nepal. Ahmed allegedly forwarded those to LeT. To buttress its point, the prosecu-

tion had relied upon the evidence of one Nooruddin, who claimed he was present when Ansari handed over the maps to Sabauddin. One of the maps, according to prosecution, was found from the possession of Abu Ismael, Kasab's accomplice killed at Girgaum-Chowpatty area.

While acquitting Ansari and Ahmed, the judge said the Pakistani handlers of the terrorists would not have gone for hand-drawn maps which were more "confusing than helpful".

"The main perpetrators have used latest techniques like Google Earth, Voice Over Internet Protocol and GPS systems to prepare for the attack," Mr Tahaliyani said. Talking to reporters, public prosecutor Ujwal Nikam said he would appeal against the acquittal of the two Indian accused in a higher court. He claimed that the prosecution had been able to present a "water-tight case" against all three accused and hoped that the circumstances which the trial court had not found sufficient for conviction of Ansari and Ahmed would nail them in the appellate court.

Kasab was captured alive on November 26-27 night in 2008 and he confessed to his crime before a Magistrate in February, spilling the beans about the conspiracy hatched in Pakistan and how they struck terror at various places in Mumbai, only to retract it as soon the trial commenced.

## Kasab verdict is message to Pak not to export terror: PC

Our Political Bureau  
NEW DELHI

WELCOMING the conviction of gunman Ajmal Amir Kasab and others, including Pakistan-based LeT masterminds Hafiz Saeed and Zaki-ur-Rehman Lakhvi, in the 26/11 case, home minister P Chidambaram has said the verdict was a clear message to Pakistan that they should not export terror to India.

"It they do (export terrorism) and we apprehend the terrorists, then we will bring them to justice," the minister told mediapersons soon after the Mumbai special court pronounced Kasab guilty on all 86 counts filed against him, including waging war against India.

Not only did the special court judge M L Tahaliyani conclude that the 26/11 conspiracy was hatched in Pakistan, but he also described 26/11 attack as an act of war against India.

Mr Chidambaram expressed satisfaction over the outcome of the trial and complimented the concerned agencies for marshalling evidence and proving guilt of Kasab and his associates beyond doubt. "We are satisfied that the trial of Mohammad Ajmal Kasab has ended in a conviction. I compliment the investigating agencies and the prosecution for marshalling the evidence and proving beyond reasonable doubt that Kasab and his associates were guilty of the horrific crimes with which they were charged before the court," he said in a statement issued by him soon after the 26/11 trial ended in conviction.

month trial showed that Indian law firmly believed in offering a fair trial to everyone notwithstanding the strong public sentiment in favour of the immediate punishment to Kasab. "Despite criticism from certain quarters (swayed by emotion and anger), we maintained that Kasab and the other accused have all the rights that are available to an accused under Indian law," he pointed out adding that trial was open. Kasab was represented by counsel and given full opportunity to plead his case.

"A criminal trial in India can only proceed step by step...The case has ended in conviction...the trial of Kasab underlines the fact that India is a country governed by the rule of law," he noted.

As for acquittal of co-accused Fahim Ansari and Sabauddin Ahmed, Mr Chidambaram said even that established how fair the Indian legal system was. The two were acquitted for want of enough evidence to link them with the 26/11 conspiracy.

Asked if Kasab's case would 'meet the same fate' as Parliament attack convict Afzal Guru, whose mercy petition against death sentence is pending since 2004, Mr Chidambaram expressed surprise why the media was obsessed with Afzal's case.

"The Opposition may be obsessed with Afzal Guru. I have explained so many times and I am surprised that you in the media repeating the question."

"We will take up each case according to the order in which the case is pending before the MHA and before the President of India. So, the cases will be taken up one by one," he said.

**P CHIDAMBARAM**  
HOME MINISTER  
It they (Pakistan) do (export terrorism) and we apprehend the terrorists, then we will bring them to justice.

## Police red-faced as court clears Fahim, Sabauddin

Our Political Bureau  
MUMBAI

EVER as public prosecutor announced the state's resolve to challenge the acquittal of Fahim Ansari and Sabauddin Ahmed, two of Kasab's alleged accomplices, the court order has left the Mumbai's elite crime branch red-faced.

Special judge M L Tahaliyani, while delivering a judgement in 26/11 case that held Kasab guilty, dismissed all charges against his two Indian suspected co-conspirators.

Former commissioner of Mumbai Police Hasan Gafoor and his deputy in charge of the crime branch, joint commissioner Rakesh Maria, had repeatedly claimed that Ansari and Ahmed had carried out reconnaissance of various targets attacked by Lashkar-e-Toiba terrorists on November 26, 2008.

But the judge on Monday dismissed the evidence against them as "unreliable". "Prosecution evidence against Fahim Ansari and Sabauddin Ahmed is unreliable...evidence falls short and cannot be accepted," the judge

observed in his ruling.

The case against these two was considerably weakened by the reported confession in an American court by US terror accused David Headley that he had surveyed the targets for the Lashkar attackers.

While observing that the main Lashkar handlers had used latest techniques like GPS, VoIP and Google earth while preparing the attacks, the judge said they could not have relied on the maps allegedly prepared by Fahim and Sabauddin. "The maps are more confusing than helpful," he said.



Fahim Ansari's wife outside the special court in Mumbai — PTI

IN INDIA INC TODAY, THERE ARE MANY NETWORKING PLATFORMS CATERING TO THE NEEDS OF SPECIFIC TARGET GROUPS LIKE STUDENTS, PARENTS, RESIDENTS, ETC, BESIDES THE USUAL ONES THAT KEEP MUSHROOMING EVERYDAY. PRIYA C NAIR CHATS UP WITH TWO ENTREPRENEURS WHO HAVE SCRIPTED THEIR OWN SUCCESS STORIES IN THIS HIGHLY COMPETITIVE SPACE WITH THEIR NICHE NETWORKING SERVICES



challenges successfully," avers Jain. According to Jain, entrepreneurs are engines of any economy, but getting into a me-too business is wastage of time and money. "There is a lot to be done with the online ecosystem in India. Focusing on the specialised verticals to solve the specific needs and pain points of customers should be the key towards starting new online ventures," suggests Jain.

### PARENTING ONLINE!

All parents would agree that bringing up a kid is no easy task. Shobha Durairajan and her team are helping today's Internet-savvy parents in getting their parenting queries resolved. "We were struggling to find answers for all the practical matters related to children like: Which school would best fit my child? Where should I shop for my kid? How can I address the various behavioural patterns of children? We would always end up finding our answers after a long search through friends, fellow parents, etc. During those moments, we would always pause and wonder how wonderful it would be to have a parenting network where like-minded parents can discuss and share ideas about the practical aspects of Indian parenting like schools, children's development, places to go to with kids, ways to deal with common parent-child conflicts, children who are poor eaters, etc. With this thought in mind, we started Parentree in August 2008 for a small set of friends and family," explains Shobha Durairajan, founder, Parentree about the launch of the Indian parenting community.



SHOBHA DURAIRAJAN

"When we informed a few friends and family members about the inception of Parentree, surprisingly, everyone wanted a platform to share, discuss, get ideas about practical Indian parenting and everything attached to it. There were many other online platforms that focused on health issues of children and babies, but none on practical parenting issues in India," says Durairajan. Even though there was a demand for such a platform, it was not easy for Durairajan and her team to start the venture. "The challenge was in building a good team, picking the right tasks to focus on and also juggling responsibilities between work and home. There is a long to-do-list, but the challenge is to prioritise that list in the best possible way so that maximum benefit can be obtained for the business," believes

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Durairajan. She has put in efforts to make her platform unique. "We enable information to flow from parent to parent rather than from an expert to a parent or book to a parent. Parents can write their own journals (blogs), participate in discussion groups and add reviews. This brings to light various perspectives and different points of view. This is important because there is no one right solution in parenting. And because it is an open com-

munity, everyone feels comfortable expressing their opinion or asking for advice," adds Durairajan.

The online space offers a lot of opportunities to aspiring entrepreneurs today. And if you have the ability to identify, explore and execute them well, the space is only destined to expand, thus paving the way for many more to follow.

ethighflier@indiatimes.com

### LOVE THY NEIGHBOUR

CommonFloor (CF) is an online application that provides a private portal for residential communities including apartment complex, villas, etc to help them foster better and effective information-sharing among all members. It is a platform to communicate with neighbours, raise issues, share ideas to improve living, create groups of owners, discuss carpooling plans, etc. "We were residing in an apartment and we felt a strong need for a solution like this. We worked with a few apartments very closely to understand their needs and then, made our solution available to a bigger target audience," says Sumit Jain, co-founder, CommonFloor.com.

But the journey was not hassle-free. "Ours was a new concept; so we worked very closely with our initial customers to get things rolling. People took some time to realise the advantages of

CommonFloor and the edge it had over the rest (read: other websites). Jain and his team tackled the issues successfully and today, CommonFloor is empowering more than 20,000 apartment societies across 70 cities in India. "Our customer-centric approach and single-minded focus to establish CF as the default platform for apartment management and communication helped us overcome the



SUMIT JAIN

**RAJAGIRI SCHOOL OF ENGINEERING & TECHNOLOGY**  
Rajagiri Valley, Kakkannad, Kochi-39, Kerala, India. Tel: +91 484 2427835, 2428238. Fax: +91 484 2426241. Web: www.rajagiritech.ac.in

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