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Pakistani witness identifies man accused in 26/11

By **Rezaul H Laskar** on April 13, 2013

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A witness on Saturday identified one of seven Pakistani men charged with involvement in the 2008 Mumbai attacks as the person who had bought inflatable boats used by the terrorists involved in the assault on India's financial hub.

Prosecutors said the witness, whom they did not name for security reasons, had identified accused Shahid Jamil Riaz during proceedings conducted behind closed doors at Adiala Jail in Rawalpindi by anti-terrorism court Judge Chaudhry Habib-ur-Rehman.

The witness told the judge that Riaz and 10 other people had bought 11 inflatable boats, saying they were to be used for fishing.

The witness further told the judge he had never seen these persons returning from sea with any fish.

A total of four private witnesses testified during the hearing.

Another witness told the judge that he had sold the accused a Yamaha boat engine for Rs 1.6 lakh and yet another witness said he had sold the accused six pumps, prosecutors said.

The witnesses also identified 10 men, including Amjad Khan and Atiqur Rehman, who were allegedly involved in planning and executing the Mumbai attacks on November 26, 2008 that left 166 people dead.

These 10 men were earlier declared “proclaimed offenders” or fugitives by the anti-terrorism court.

“The 10 proclaimed offenders were either trainers or facilitators of the accused who launched the attacks in Mumbai,” chief prosecutor Chaudhry Zulifqar Ali said.

One witness told the court that Amjad Khan had obtained from him a “port clearance certificate” for Al-Hussaini, a fishing boat used by the terrorists.

Amjad Khan was also involved in purchasing the inflatable boats, another witness said.

Though Chief prosecutor Ali identified the four private witnesses as Hamza Bin Tariq, Muhammad Ali, Mohammad Saifullah Khan and Umer Draz Khan, he refused to go into details of their individual testimony for security reasons. All the witnesses belong to the port city of Karachi.

Additional Director Altaf Hussain of the Federal Investigation Agency, who played a key role in probing the Mumbai attacks, was present during the hearing but the judge did not allow him to testify as a defence lawyer argued that Hussain should record his statement after the private witnesses.

Prosecutors said the cross-examination of the four private witnesses could not be conducted as the main defence lawyers did not attend the hearing.

In the past too, the defence lawyers have held up proceedings by exploiting legal loopholes and posing hurdles for the proceedings, officials said.

The judge adjourned the case till April 27, when the four witnesses are expected to be cross-examined.

“The witnesses protested against being summoned for the next hearing as it will result in a lot of expenses for them. They demanded an allowance for travelling back to Rawalpindi from Karachi,” chief prosecutor Ali said.

Amjad Khan, the fugitive identified by the witnesses, is a shadowy Lashkar-e-Tayyeba organiser and financier

from Karachi who figured in a majority of dossiers provided to Pakistan by India.

Khan, who hails from Multan, played a key role in arranging and providing funds to the ten terrorists who attacked Mumbai.

Khan is one of 20 suspects in the Mumbai attacks who are yet to be traced by Pakistani investigators.

These 20 suspects were named in a chargesheet filed in the anti-terrorism court in 2009. They were all accused of playing a key role in facilitating the Mumbai attacks.

Pakistani authorities have so far arrested seven suspects, including LeT operations commander Zakiur Rehman Lakhvi. They have been charged with planning, financing and executing the attacks.

Their trial has progressed at a snail's pace due to repeated adjournments and various technical delays.

Nine of the terrorists involved in the attack were killed by Indian security forces. The only surviving attacker, Ajmal Kasab, was hanged in Pune jail on November 21 last year.

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