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14-16 Indians involved in 26/11 attack, says Mumbai police

Sheela Bhatt in Mumbai | February 12, 2009 21:11 IST
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Mumbai Police Commissioner Hassan Gafoor on Thursday stated on record that Indians were involved in the terror attack on Mumbai last November.

In a tape-recorded conversation with the media at the Mumbai Police headquarters at Crawford Market, Gafoor said that 16 Indians are suspected to be involved in the Mumbai attacks, besides the two who have already been arrested.

None of them is a resident of Mumbai, he said, adding that they are all from 'North India'.

When *rediff.com* asked him, "Can we say that the Mumbai police is, for the first time, claiming that there was local involvement in the Mumbai attacks," an unusually confident Gafoor replied, "The Mumbai police is not claiming. This is a fact."

He added that the names of the 16 accused have been sent to Islamabad [Images], because the information received by the Mumbai police suggested that they had fled to Pakistan.

"None of the Indians were the masterminds or handlers of the attack," he stressed in response to another question by *rediff.com*.

The sensational statement from the police commissioner, which has serious diplomatic, political and legal ramifications, came on the day that Pakistan unexpectedly admitted that 'part of the conspiracy' behind the Mumbai terror attacks [Images] was planned in its territory.

It is relevant that Gafoor chose this very day to reveal this stunning fact about the Mumbai terror attack -- when India was savouring the fruits of coercive diplomacy with the help of United States, Britain, France [Images] and Germany [Images].

Gafoor said, "Pakistan's admission shows the success of so many police organisations, which got together to fight. The Federal Bureau of Investigation, the Scotland Yard, the Singapore police, the French police and the German police have helped us."

The police forces of these countries have helped expedite the investigations into the Mumbai terror attack, which were led by Joint Commissioner (Crime) of Mumbai Police Rakesh Maria [Images].

The media had gathered at the Mumbai Police HQ for Gafoor's reaction to Pakistan's admission. The police chief's surprising revelation came when he was asked, "Besides Fahim Ansari and Sabahuddin, has any other local support for the attacks been found, during the course of the investigation?"

He replied, "Local means fellows who have acted much earlier. They are Indians."

When asked if the local elements had been arrested, Gafoor said, "Only two (Fahim Ansari and Sabahudin) have been arrested. The others have disappeared".

He added that the Indians involved in the terror attack had conducted a reconnaissance of the areas that were targeted and provided financial support for the operation, after being trained in Pakistan.

When *rediff.com* asked him specifically if all of them were connected to the attack on Mumbai, Gafoor replied in the affirmative.

Initially, Gafoor said that there could be 14 to 16 Indians involved in the attack, he later clarified that these included some Pakistani nationals.

The locals who helped carry out the attacks came to Mumbai many months ago and stayed here, he said.

Indian terrorist Riyaz Bhatkal is not among the names that were sent to Pakistan, Gafoor said. Terrorists named in the dossier, which was handed over to Pakistan by India, did not include any members of the Indian Mujahideen [Images], he said.

Gafoor added that the investigations so far had not found any links about IM leader Bhatkal's involvement in the attack.

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Responding to *rediff.com*'s query, he categorically stated that all nine terrorists killed during the terror siege were Pakistanis, there was no one from India or Bangladesh among them.

A senior Congress leader and one of the key strategists of the party explained the rationale behind Gafoor's revelations. He said, "It was India's strategy to wait for Islamabad to first accept that the Mumbai attack was planned inside Pakistan. Before we revealed the involvement of Indians in the attack, it was necessary that they admit the involvement of Pakistan-based people. They would have ducked the issue if we had revealed all the facts. Since Pakistan has now admitted that Pakistani-based elements masterminded the attack and that Kasab [\[Images\]](#) (the lone terrorist arrested during the terror strike) and the other terrorists were Pakistanis, there is no harm in revealing facts that are already known to the Mumbai police and the government."

The source added, "Gujarat Chief Minister Narendra Modi [\[Images\]](#) jumped the queue and gave an immature statement. He should have waited till the chargesheet in the case had been filed."

Gafoor, however, is aware of the importance of the diplomatic win, when Pakistan has partially admitted the claims made by the Mumbai police and the Indian government. He admitted, "It is a very big achievement, not only for the Mumbai police but also for the entire country."

He refused to comment on Pakistan Interior Minister Rehman Malik's statement about the investigation being conducted by the neighbouring country.

Malik had identified Hamad Amin Sadiq as the main operator who facilitated and coordinated the Mumbai attack.

When queried if Sadiq's name had cropped during his team's investigations, Gafoor evaded a direct reply by saying, "We have not received any official communication from Pakistan. We are only going by what is being said."

When the question was repeated again, the police commissioner said, "We had given 13-14 names to Pakistan. I would not like to disclose the names at this moment."

He refused to divulge if there were any common names in the list given by Malik and those mentioned in India's dossier on terror.

Gafoor added that none of the terrorists took any kind of help or talked to anyone during the 60-hour siege.

He told the media persons that the French government had filed a case based on the deaths of its citizens in the Mumbai attack. France may ask for Kasab's extradition, he said, but added that the Indian courts would decide whether to hand over the terrorist's custody.

Crime should be investigated without barriers of borders or nationality, emphasised Gafoor.

He reiterated that the "Mumbai attack was certainly a Lashkar-e-Tayiba [\[Images\]](#) operation. There is no doubt about it." But he did not rule out possibility of the terror attack being linked to the "Al Qaeda [\[Images\]](#) or any such organisation".

When asked about the possible links of Pakistan terrorists in Italy [\[Images\]](#), Russia [\[Images\]](#) and Spain, he said, "The Voice over Internet Protocol operates in a virtual space and the link was through some of these countries. There is nothing physical about it."

Gafoor added that the Kasab's statement on the 26/11 attack had already been recorded.

According to the police chief, reports about the terrorists making a halt at Gujarat, before proceeding to Mumbai, were not true. The records of the Global Positioning System, which was found at the abandoned ship Kuber, prove this theory wrong, he said.

Speaking about how the terrorists reached Mumbai, Gafoor stuck to the earlier version stated by the Mumbai police. The terrorists came from Karachi in the ship Al Hussein, then they hijacked Indian ship Kuber, after which they sailed in *dinghies* to reach the Mumbai coast, he said.

When asked to comment on reports about Pakistan accepting the evidence put forward by the FBI and other foreign police agencies, and not reacting enough to the Indian dossier, Gafoor said, "I think there is no difference between what we have provided and what the FBI has provided because both of us are talking the truth. It has to be the same."

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What Gafoor and Maria are saying is essentially the same. There are at least 15 people involved and they cannot be named because they are from RAW and hindu zionist movement

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We all know that Mumbai is the top class business hub, where goons,smugglers, money launderers,cheats,back-stabbers,traders who gobble up the public money and rogues flourish. Poor Mumbaikar compromises on all these to eke out a living which is otherwise not possible in his home town (where he has to beg). We have people who will happily help terrorists for a few thousand rupees. Even a child knows that terrorist attack of this magnitude cannot happen without local support. There is no point in discussing, from which state these people have come. If a Paki can squeeze into Mumbai and convince a person of his religion with money and favours anything can happen. We are vulnerable. Our politicians are a bit short of terrorists. The damage caused by them is much more than the 20/11 incident, at the national level. We, the aam janta are going to talk about all these for a few more days and forget till another event happens. We will move to the next episode and the media will bark for a few more days and make money. The story does not end.

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Although congress now claims the denial of local involmnet as 'a key strategy'it must be borne in mind that with elections approaching and muslims already up in arms against the indiscriminate arrests being made after every blast, it could have named the local conspirators only at its peril. It is the political expediency which dictates a party's stand on any issue and not national interest. In this context it must be noted that according to Mr Gafoor all the local help has vanished (he says to Pakistan, so that no more questions are asked)

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