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High Court acquits LeT suspect Nazir, others in 2006 Kozhikode twin blasts case

Appalled by the manner in which the confessions were recorded, says court

SHAJU PHILIP
THIRUVANANTHAPURAM,
JANUARY 27

In a setback to the National Investigation Agency (NIA), a division bench of Kerala High Court on Thursday acquitted suspected Laskkar-e-Toiba (LeT) operative Tadjantevile Nazir and one of his relatives in the 2006 Kozhikode twin blasts case in which both had been sentenced to life imprisonment. The court also rejected an NIA appeal against the acquittal of other two accused in the case.

In 2011, an NIA court had held

Nazir and his sister-in-law's husband Shafas guilty of offences under the Unlawful Activities Prevention Act and sentenced them to life imprisonment. They were also sentenced to another five years in jail under IPC provisions. That apart, Nazir was given another life term under the Explosive Substances Act.

Other two accused, whose acquittal was upheld by High Court on Thursday, are Abdul Haleem and Aboobacker Yusuf.

Once a close aide of Kerala-based People's Democratic Party chairman and Islamic cleric Abdul Nazer Mahdani, Nazir is a key figure in Kerala's terror cases.

Although acquitted in the Kozhikode blasts case, he would remain in jail, serving a life sentence awarded in a case pertaining to recruitment of Kerala youths for terror training in Kashmir. Besides, he is under trial in the 2008 Bengaluru blast case.

According to the NIA, the accused had conspired and executed the blasts — at two bus stands in Kozhikode on March 3, 2006 — to avenge bail denial to 130-odd people arrested in the 2003 Marad communal riots case. No death was reported in the twin blasts.

The NIA, which took over the

probe from Kerala Police, mainly built up the case based on confessions of another suspect, who was made an approver.

Observing that there is no reliable evidence that would incriminate the accused beyond reasonable doubt, the division bench of Justices K Vinod Chandran and Ziyad Rahman said, "We are appalled by the

manner in which the confessions, purportedly under Section 27, were recorded, with portions relating to the crime as such, offending Sections 25 and 26 of the Evidence Act. Confessions may have an element of truth in it but it fails to persuade the judges, in travelling the distance between 'may be true' and 'must be true'."

India willing to partner on Afghan aid: envoy to UN

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
UNITED NATIONS, JANUARY 27

INDIA'S APPROACH to Afghanistan has always been guided by its "special relationship" with the Afghan people and New Delhi remains steadfast in its commitment towards much-needed humanitarian assistance to the people of the war-torn country, India's Permanent Representative to the UN Ambassador T S Tirumurti said on Wednesday.

Tirumurti said as Afghanistan's largest regional development partner, India is willing to coordinate with other stakeholders to work towards enabling expeditious provision of much-needed humanitarian assistance to the Afghan people.

"Our special relationship with the Afghan people and the guidance spell out in UNSC Resolution 2593 would continue to guide India's approach to Afghanistan. We remain steadfast in our commitment towards humanitarian assistance to the people of Afghanistan," he said at Security Council briefing on the UN Assistance Mission in Afghanistan.

In this endeavour, the diplomat noted, India has committed to provide 50,000 MT of wheat and lifesaving medicines and one million doses of Covid vaccines to the Afghan people.

India has already dispatched three shipments of humanitarian assistance consisting of medicines, including those for Covid, which were handed over to the WHO and the Indira Gandhi Children Hospital in Kabul.

India also joined other Council members last month in supporting a resolution to provide humanitarian assistance to the people of Afghanistan, while ensuring that the Security Council exercises its oversight to guard against any possible diversion of funds and misuse of exemptions from sanctions.

Tirumurti reiterated that humanitarian assistance should be based on principles of neutrality, impartiality, and independence and disbursement of the aid should be non-discriminatory and accessible to all.

SC asks Punjab not to take action against Majithia till January 31

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI, JANUARY 27

THE SUPREME Court on Thursday gave Shiromani Akali Dal (SAD) leader Bikram Singh Majithia protection from arrest in a drugs case till January 31, when it will hear his anticipatory bail plea, and directed the Punjab government not to take any action until then.

"Tell your state not to do anything. We will hear [the plea] on Monday (January 31)," Chief Justice of India N V Ramana told senior advocate P Chidambaram, appearing for the Punjab government.

A case under the Narcotics and Psychotropic Substances (NDPS) Act, 1985, was registered against Majithia in Mohali last December.

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