

Pakistan jails Hafiz Saeed for terrorism financing

Hafiz Saeed is accused by India and the United States of masterminding the 2008 attacks in Mumbai

● Saeed was charged in Pakistan in December with collecting funds for his banned organisations

● Saeed is the founder of Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT), or the Army of the Pure, a group blamed by India and the United States for the four-day Mumbai siege

● His most recent arrest came in July last year

● The court's judgement did not specify which banned terrorist group Saeed belonged to

AFP | Lahore, Pakistan

The alleged mastermind of a deadly attack on India's financial capital over a decade ago has been jailed in Pakistan for nearly six years on separate terror charges, his lawyer said yesterday.

Hafiz Saeed was found guilty of "being part of a banned terror-



Hafiz Saeed speaks with supporters after attending Friday Prayers in Lahore, Pakistan

ist outfit" and for "having illegal property", his lawyer Imran Gill said.

He is wanted in India for allegedly planning the shocking 2008 attack in Mumbai, when 10 militants armed with assault rifles, hand grenades and other weapons killed 166 people and injured hundreds more.

It took the authorities three days to regain full control of the city.

Lawyer Gill gave no details about Saeed's conviction apart from saying he would be kept in prison in the eastern city of Lahore.

The firebrand cleric -- declared a global terrorist by the United States and United Nations, and with a \$10 million bounty on his head -- is the leader of the Jamaat-ud-Dawa Islamist charity.

Its militant wing Lash-

kar-e-Taiba (LeT) is believed by Washington and Delhi to be responsible for the Mumbai attacks.

India has long said there is evidence that "official agencies" in Pakistan were involved in plotting the attack -- a charge Islamabad denies.

Move at will

Saeed has denied involvement, but has spent years in and out of varying forms of detention in Pakistan, sometimes under house arrest, on various charges.

For the most part he has been free to move at will around the country, enraging India which has repeatedly called for his prosecution.

His most recent arrest came

in July last year. At the time, US President Donald Trump tweeted that he had been detained "after a ten-year search", prompting derision from cynical Pakistanis.

The US Foreign Affairs Committee also noted then that Saeed had been arrested and released eight times since 2001.

Saeed's jailing comes as Pakistan faces potential blacklisting by the Financial Action Task Force (FATF) -- an anti-money-laundering monitor based in Paris -- for failing to combat terror financing.

"There was nothing to the case really, this was just due to pressure from the FATF," his lawyer Gill said.

The court's judgement did not specify which banned terrorist group Saeed belonged to or clarify what it meant by "illegal property", which can refer to money or other property.

There was also no immediate comment from the JuD group, and coverage of the sentence was muted on Pakistani news channels.

Saeed's sentence came days after a leading member of the Pakistani Taliban, former spokesman Ehsanullah Ehsan, escaped custody more than two years after surrendering to authorities.

He has released an audio statement claiming to be in Turkey.



A convoy carrying Hafiz Saeed leaves court after the verdict in Lahore

Pope dismisses proposal to ordain married men as priests in Amazon

Reuters | Vatican City

Pope Francis, in one of the most significant decisions of his papacy, yesterday dismissed a proposal that older married men be ordained in the Amazon region to ease an acute scarcity of priests.

The recommendation, put forward by Latin American bishops last year, had alarmed conservatives in the deeply polarised 1.3 billion-member Roman Catholic Church, who feared that it could lead to a change in the centuries-old



commitment to celibacy among priests.

Francis delivered his response in an Apostolic Exhortation three months after the proposal was made at a contentious assembly of Roman Catholic bishops, or synod, at the Vatican.

Apostolic Exhortations are teaching documents used to encourage the Catholic faithful but do not define Church doctrine.

Pope Francis speaks at a conference hosted by the Vatican on economic solidarity, at the Vatican

Sudan govt agrees Bashir should appear before ICC over Darfur

Reuters | Khartoum/Juba

Sudan's government and rebel groups in Darfur agreed yesterday that all those wanted by the International Criminal Court should appear before the tribunal, a list that includes ousted president Omar al-Bashir.

Bashir, who has been jailed in Khartoum since he was toppled after mass protests last year, is wanted by the ICC for alleged war crimes, genocide and crimes against humanity in Darfur.

Information Minister Faisal Saleh did not specifically name him when announcing the move, but said the decision applied to all five Sudanese suspects wanted by the ICC over Darfur.

The government and the rebel groups reached an agreement during a meeting in South Sudan's capital Juba that included "the appearance of those who face arrest warrants before the International Criminal Court", said Mohamed al-Hassan al-Taishi, a member of Sudan's sovereign council.

Taishi also said that the two sides agreed to create a Darfur special court to investigate and hear cases including those investigated by the ICC.

That court would try Darfur suspects not indicted by the ICC, said Nimri Mohamed Abd, chief negotiator of the Darfur people in Juba. He said Darfur groups and Sudan's government had agreed to "fully cooperate with the International Criminal Court", and that the timing of the handover would be decided



Sudan's former president Omar Hassan al-Bashir sits inside a cage at the courthouse where he is facing corruption charges, in Khartoum, Sudan

in final negotiations.

Bashir's lawyer said the ex-president refused to have any dealings with the ICC because it was a "political court".

Bashir has said the allegations made by the ICC, the world's first permanent court for prosecuting war crimes, are part of a Western conspiracy.

A spokesman for the ICC declined to comment. The Hague-based court issued its first arrest warrant for Bashir in 2009 - its first for a sitting head of state - and a year later issued a second one.

Sudan's civilian government, which is running the country under a three-year transition with the military, has been seeking to make peace with rebels in Darfur and other neglected regions which had been fighting Bashir's government for years.

Cheesed off?



Photographer captures two mice fighting on a Tube platform to become the Natural History Museum's Wildlife Photographer of the Year. Raging rodents on the London Underground won the annual contest, as Sam Rowley's 'Station Squabble' captured a split-second spat over scraps of food. It came out on top after 48,000 photographs of animals were this year submitted to the competition, with only 25 making the final shortlist of commended images. The panel of judges said: 'Sam discovered the best way (Courtesy of Daily Mail)



Bashir faces five counts of crimes against humanity for murder, forcible transfer, extermination, torture and rape; two counts of war crimes for attacks against civilians; and three counts of genocide for killings and creating conditions meant to bring about the destruction of the targeted group, allegedly committed between 2003 and 2008 in Darfur.