

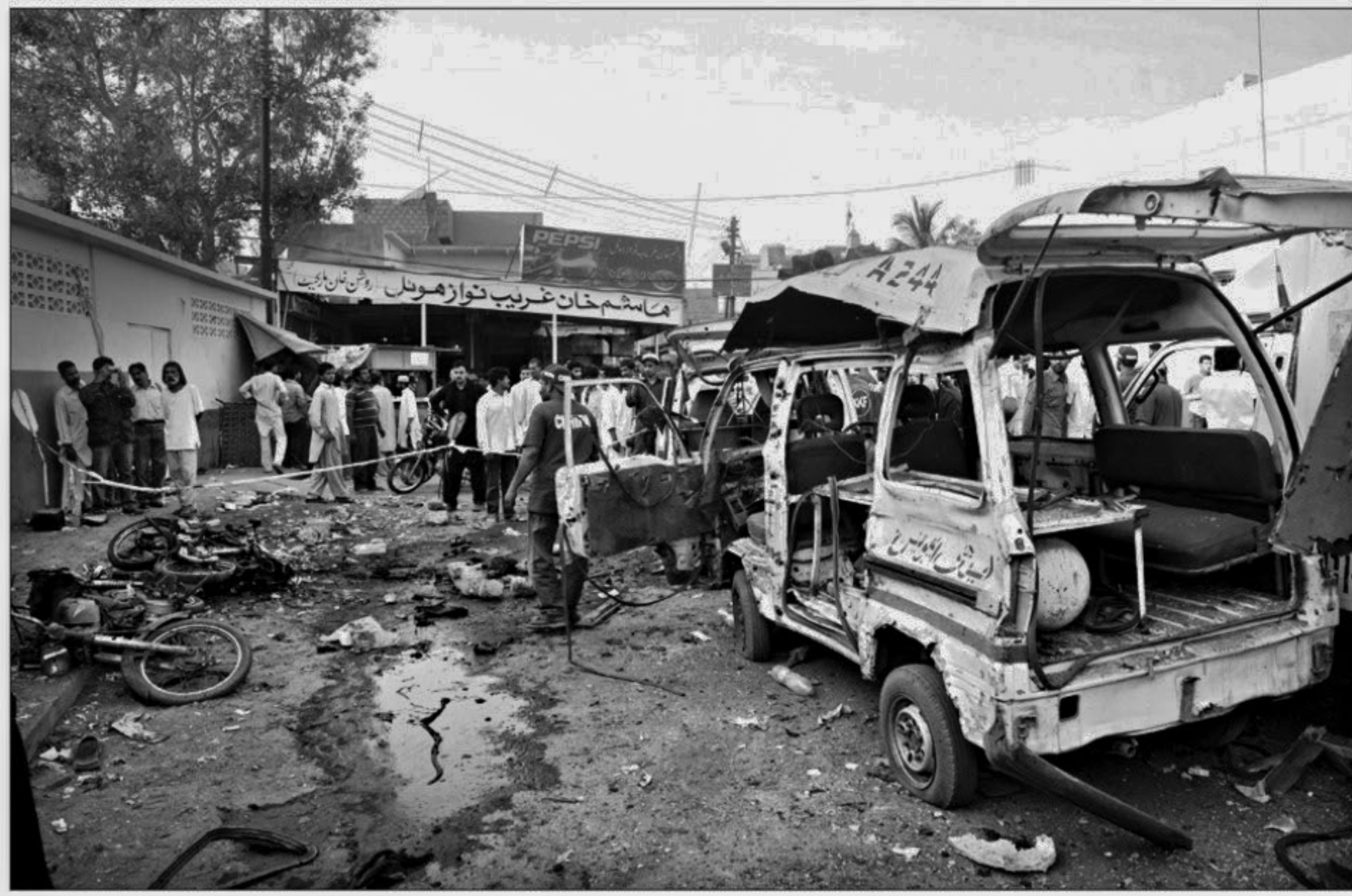
Lanka launches crackdown against army deserters

EU to suspend Lanka's preferential trade status over rights abuse

AFP, Colombo Brussels
Sri Lankan police and troops began a crackdown yesterday against thousands of military deserters after a large number failed to heed a surrender call, military officials said.
Some 1,400 soldiers who were absent without leave turned up at military camps Thursday to take advantage of an amnesty declared to coincide with Sri Lanka's national holiday marking the island's 1948 independence.
But thousands more were still listed as deserters, a military official said.
"From today (Friday), the army and the police will step up search operations to arrest deserters," the official, who declined to be named, said.
Military spokesman Udaya Nanayakkara confirmed that 1,422 troops who were listed as deserters surrendered Thursday but added others were yet to respond.
In a bid to clean up its rolls, Sri Lanka's

military formally discharged last October nearly 25,000 army, navy and air force personnel who deserted at the height of fighting with Tamil rebels.
But since then more troops have left the security forces without permission.
The clean-up of the military rolls came after government forces defeated the Tamil Tiger separatists in May 2009 following decades of bloody ethnic conflict.
Even though fighting has ended, the military still wants to recruit new troops to fill vacancies in the 200,000-strong army and deploy them in areas of the north and east captured from the Tamil rebels.
Meanwhile, EU nations have decided to suspend Sri Lanka's preferential trade status because of the island's human rights record and will make the formal move later this month, officials said Friday.
"European ambassadors have taken the decision. The EU Commission's investigation showed Sri Lanka has not

demonstrated that it has taken the steps that would allow it to retain or regain the GSP+ status," a European diplomat said.
However the suspension would not come into effect until six months later.
The European Union's Generalised System of Preferences Plus (GPS+) scheme gives 16 poor nations preferential access to the trading bloc in return for following strict commitments on a wide variety of social and rights issues.
The decision to suspend the trade privileges was taken last week and is set to be endorsed by European finance ministers when they meet in Brussels on February 16, the diplomat said.
This is in part to allow manufacturers and traders to adjust to the new rules, but it also gives Colombo a fair opportunity to get the decision reversed.
"We will look to work with Sri Lanka to identify concerted steps and actions which could help us to plot the course together that would enable Sri Lanka to regain GSP+" the diplomat said



Pakistani volunteers gather beside the wreckage and damaged ambulances in front of a local hospital emergency gate following a bomb blast in Karachi yesterday. Twin bombings in Pakistan's financial capital on Friday killed at least 23 people.

NEWS IN BRIEF

Australian literary prize dumped

AFP, Sydney
One of Australasia's richest literary prizes was scrapped Friday after the resource-rich state of West Australia said it was a waste of money.
The 110,000-dollar (95,502 US) Australia-Asia Literary Award (AALA) was launched in 2008 as the biggest prize in the region, with the then-Labor state government saying it gave Asia an award on a par with those of Europe.

Son's dogs maul woman to death

AFP, Vienna
An Austrian man's two Rottweiler guard dogs have mauled his 78-year-old mother to death at their business outside Vienna, police said on Friday.
A woman discovered the body when she arrived at the family carpentry business in Lassee to feed the dogs on Thursday evening, police said. Her body was covered with bite wounds and scratch marks.



Indian Prime Minister Manmohan Singh (2nd R) talks with Greek Prime Minister George Papandreu (2nd L) and President of Slovenia Danilo Turk (L) as Director General of The Energy and Resources Institute (TERI) RK Pachauri (R) looks on during The World Sustainable Development Forum 2010, 'Beyond Copenhagen: New Pathways to sustainable development' summit in New Delhi yesterday.

Manmohan backs UN climate panel, disappointed with Copenhagen

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE, New Delhi
Prime Minister Manmohan Singh yesterday backed the beleaguered UN climate change panel, saying India had 'full confidence' in the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) and its leadership.
In a major speech at the opening of the Delhi Sustainable Development Summit (DSDS) that began here Friday, Manmohan Singh also said that he was disappointed with the 'limited achievements' of the Copenhagen summit.
A key part of the prime minister's speech -- heard by more than 150 delegates from around the world -- covered the working of the IPCC and its chief, RK Pachauri.
"Some aspects of the science that is reflected in the work of the IPCC have faced criticism. But this debate does not challenge the core projections of the IPCC about the impact of greenhouse gas accumulations on tempera-

ture, rainfall and sea level rise," Manmohan Singh said.
This is the first major global meeting after the Copenhagen climate summit of December. The theme of the three-day meet, organised by The Energy Research Institute (TERI), is "Beyond Copenhagen: New Pathways to Sustainable Development."
"Let me here assert that India has full confidence in the IPCC process and its leadership and will support it in every way that it can," Manmohan Singh said.
The IPCC has been under fire since revelations last month that its landmark Fourth Assessment Report mistakenly predicted that the Himalayan glaciers could disappear by 2035 as a result of global warming.
A day earlier, Environment Minister Jairam Ramesh too had come out in support of Pachauri, who is under sustained attack in the British media in particular.

Delhi launches ambulance for trees

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE, New Delhi
Equipped with water tanks, chain saws, tree pruners, sprayers and ladders -- an ambulance for trees set out Friday to protect the green cover in parts of the national capital.
The unique initiative under the New Delhi Municipal Council (NDMC) was launched Friday by Delhi Chief Minister Sheila Dikshit, who said she wanted the tree ambulances to run not only in select parts but in the entire city.
The NDMC takes care of civic administration in three percent of Delhi's land area.
"Dikshit congratulated the NDMC for a new initiative which will enrich efforts of tree protection.

Pakistan 'ready to help' Afghan reconciliation

AFP, Islamabad
Pakistan said Thursday it could play an important role in promoting reconciliation in Afghanistan and was willing to assist Afghan-led peace efforts after an eight-year Taliban insurgency.
Afghan President Hamid Karzai won backing for a new peace and reconciliation programme with the Taliban at a conference in London last month aimed at establishing a road map for the war-torn country.
"We fully agree that reconciliation and reintegration in Afghanistan is an important element to achieve peace and stability in the country," Pakistani foreign ministry spokesman Abdul Basit told reporters.
"We genuinely believe Pakistan can be helpful in this process. We would like the government of Afghanistan to see how they would like to lead this process. It is also for

Afghanistan to determine what role other countries can play.
"Pakistan is ready to help in whatever way it is asked for... Pakistan can play an important role in promoting genuine reconciliation," he added.
Many Afghans believe Pakistan's powerful military are sponsoring the Taliban, preparing for the day US troops leave so that Islamabad can exercise influence over a Taliban government, offsetting rival power India.
"We already have serious concerns about India for using Afghanistan (soil) to destabilise Pakistan," said Basit.
Pakistan, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates all recognised Afghanistan's 1996-2001 Taliban government, which was toppled by US-led forces after the September 11 attacks.
Karzai met Saudi King Abdullah this week in what was thought to be an effort to get Saudi Arabia to coax Taliban leaders into reconciliation talks.

Obama's Kenyan aunt can stay in the US for two more months

ANI, Boston
A US immigration judge has given President Barack Obama's Kenyan aunt two more months to prepare an argument against her deportation.
The decision came six years after Aunt Zeituni Onyango was first ordered to leave the United States.
On Thursday, an immigration judge heard two hours of testimony from Zeituni Onyango, 57, and gave lawyers until mid-March to file written arguments.
Onyango entered court in a wheelchair with a cane across her lap.



Indian Congress party General Secretary Rahul Gandhi (C) walks on a railway platform in Mumbai yesterday. During his four-hour stay, Rahul boarded a local train from Andheri to Dadar, interacted with people on the streets and in the train and signed autographs, despite a war of words with the Shiv Sena and other right-wing outfits, which had raised security concerns over his visit to India's financial capital.

Teargas shell didn't hit All-out steps to bring killers back

FROM PAGE 1
Siddique received severe injuries to his head during factional fight between Chhatra League men at Sir AF Rahman Hall, which led to his death. The solid object, which caused the injury, was not a teargas shell, he claimed.
Quoting the autopsy report, the DMP commissioner said the victim was hit by a blunt object. "No evidence of any bullet hitting him was found."
The solid portion of a modern teargas shell stays inside the gun when it is fired and only a soft part is shot, which cannot cause death, he claimed.
On the day Siddique died, physician at the Intensive Care Unit of Dhaka Medical College Hospital Shafiqul Islam told reporters that doctors found a hole and a fragment of a metal in his head.
Quoting a surgeon who conducted surgery on Siddique, DU Vice-Chancellor AAMS Arefin Siddique on that day said something heavy hit the victim's head damaging the skull. Arefin said the principal of DMCH informed him that the victim was either hit with an iron rod or stone or something similar.
Confusion over the issue still persists as dormitory students claim that a police-fired teargas canister hit Siddique's head. Some students of the dormitory and Siddique's roommates claimed that he received a bullet.
Siddique, a third-year student of Islamic history and

culture department of the university, received severe head injuries Tuesday at the dormitory and died on Wednesday after fighting for his life for over 30 hours at DMCH.
JCD BRIEFING
Top leaders of Jatiyatabadi Chhatra Dal called for the strike at a press conference at the organisation's central office in the afternoon.
Reading out a statement, Chhatra Dal General Secretary Amirul Islam Alim placed a six-point demand including punishment of Chhatra League men who were involved in the killing of Siddique, ousting criminals from educational institutions, stopping admission trade at colleges under the National University, resignation of DU vice-chancellor and withdrawal of "false" cases filed against Chhatra Dal leaders.
The student body also declared a three-day demonstration programme to press home their demands. On February 8, leaders and activists of Chhatra Dal will stage demonstrations at all divisional cities and at district headquarters the next day.
They threatened indefinite strike at DU if their demands were not met.
Amirul Islam Alim said he, however, did not say how he became so sure.

Rehana placed wreaths at the Mazar of Bangabandhu and offered fatiha there.
Land Minister Rezaul Karim Hira, Commerce Minister Faruk Khan, Communications Minister Syed Abul Hossain, Adviser to the PM Tarique Ahmed Siddique, Parliament members Sheikh Helal Uddin, Fazley Noor Taposh and local AL leaders, among others, were present.

Six journo's injured

FROM PAGE 1
chased the private car and found that it was parked before the Bengali daily Kaler Kantho bureau office.
When they asked Selim, the driver of the car, about the incident, he got furious and at one stage attacked the newsmen along with some of his friends.
At one stage of brawl, they started damaging Pranab's motorbike.
A number of reporters from different adjoining newspaper offices including Prothom Alo, The Daily Star, Kaler Kantho and Samakal rushed there while local goons led by Taj Uddin attacked on them.
They assaulted the journalists and threatened them with dire consequences.
Five reporters including Pranab Baul of Prothom Alo,

Rahul visits Mumbai

ANI, Mumbai
Congress General Secretary Rahul Gandhi completed an eventful four-hour-long visit to Mumbai yesterday afternoon, ignoring warnings of caution from the right-wing Shiv Sena and the Maharashtra Navnirman Sena (MNS) about statements related to the city and other parts of Maharashtra.
Gandhi left by helicopter for Pudukcherry, but not before indirectly cocking a snook at both the Shiv Sena and the MNS.
During his four-hour-long stay, Gandhi swept aside security norms set for him to stop at an ATM in Santa Cruz for cash, boarded a local train from Andheri to Dadar, interacted with people in the streets and in the train and signed autographs. Besides this, he also interacted with and addressed Youth Congress activists in colleges in the city's Vile Parle and Ghatkopar areas.
Vile Parle, Dadar and Ghatkopar are Shiv Sena bastions politically, and Gandhi, it seems, appeared to be sending a pointed message to the right-wing outfit that he meant what he said that Mumbai is for all Indians, and not just for the "Marathi Manos", Maharastrians and Mumbaikars.

'Indo-Pak security concerns in Afghanistan dilemma for US'

ANI, Washington
US Special Representative to Afghanistan and Pakistan Richard Holbrooke has said that the conflicting security concerns of countries like India and Pakistan in Afghanistan serve as a major 'dilemma' for the Obama administration.
"The Indians have a legitimate series of security interests in that region, as do a number of other countries including, of course, Pakistan, China, and all the other countries that neighbour on Afghanistan," Holbrooke said when asked to comment over the traditional elbowing between India and Pakistan for playing a greater role in Afghanistan.
"The dilemma arises when those security interests tend to be in conflict. Afghanistan has suffered throughout history by the fact that it has sometimes become the terrain for surrogate struggles for power. We do not want to see that happen. I hope that that will be something we can continue to work on," he added.
Holbrooke also ruled out any chances of the US playing the role of an 'intermediator' between India and Pakistan.
"We are not going to negotiate or mediate on that issue and I'm going to try to keep my record and not even mention it by name," The Dawn quoted Holbrooke, as saying.

Kolkata HC confirms death for American Centre attackers

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE, Kolkata
The Kolkata High Court Friday upheld the death sentence to Aftab Ansari and Jamiluddin Nasir in the American Centre attack case.
A division bench comprising Asim Banerjee and Justice Kalidas Mukherjee pronounced the verdict after a 77-day hearing.
Six policemen were killed in the attack in front of the American Centre here Jan 22, 2002.
Ansari, Nasir and five others had appealed to the High Court against the death sentence given to them by a city sessions court.
Ansari and Nasir's death sentence was upheld while the punishment of Hasrat Alam, Sakib Akhtar and Bobby was reduced to life sentence. The remaining two Rehan Alam alias Monty and Adil Hossain were freed due to lack of evidence.
Public prosecutor Animesh Goswami had earlier urged upholding the death sentences of Ansari, Nasir, Sakib Akhtar, Hasrat Alam, and Bobby, while leaving the quantum of sentence to the two others to the discretion of the court, saying that the evidence against them was little.
The lawyers for the seven convicts claimed that they were innocent and had been framed.