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Surfacing of video clip creates stir in UAE case

Ramaninder K Bhatia , TNN, Jun 11, 2010, 03.29am IST

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CHANDIGARH: Posting of two video clips on a popular video uploading site is creating quite a stir among those involved in the case relating to 17 Indian, mainly Punjabi, youths, who have been awarded death sentence in UAE for alleged murder of a Pakistani youth.

The case is coming up for appeal on June 16.

The video uploads, lasting barely a few seconds, feature three men, one of whom is described as Mushtaq Ahmed, brother of the slain youth and reportedly the sole eyewitness in the case, who is quoted as saying he did not identify any of the 17 people who have been sentenced for murder of his brother. In the second clip, the same man is heard responding to a query by a woman interviewer, by saying his family is not interested in accepting blood money and that they would seek punishment for the perpetrator of the crime.

The videos have also been uploaded on the site of Lawyers for Human Rights International (LFHRI). The organization's lawyer Navkiran Singh, who had visited the Indian prisoners in Sharjah soon after the sentence, had come back to India to reveal for the first time that the eyewitness had not identified any one of the accused.

Even as relatives of the 17 youths rejoiced after hearing the news, the defence lawyers, who have been hired by the Indian consulate to defend the 17 youths after much hue and cry back home, told TOI that they too had received a CD of the reported interview of the lone eyewitness and they were checking veracity of the same.

Bindu Suresh, an assisting counsel to the defence lawyer Mohammad Salman, told TOI from Dubai that they were trying to authenticate origin of the video. "In any case, we would be calling for eyewitnesses in the case as apparently, they were not called in during the first trial," Suresh said.

Indian authorities associated with the trial, meanwhile, cautioned politicians and organizations against making statements on issues such as blood money, as it would "go against the 17 people standing trial".

In the video clip titled 'Mustaq1.m4v', the man in focus talks of how he told the 'CID' (the investigators in UAE) he could not identify the accused due to the fear of God: "Hum CID ko bola ke agar hum bolta hai, ki yeh hai, yeh aadmi hai.. aapko to aasan ho gaya, ke yeh aadmi hai, ek to pakda gaya. Lekin agar faisla hua ki yeh aadmi nahin hamare saath jhagra kiya. Yeh aadmi nahin hai, tum isko maut ki saza dila... Aur humko to alla-tala pakrega ki tum jhooth bola, aadmi jhagra nahin kiya, lekin tum pakarwa ke, maut ki saza dilaya (I told the CID man that if I identified any of the men just because I was asked to do so, it may make things easy for the police. But later, if they did not turn out to be the culprits, I would be answerable to God for having sent an innocent man to gallows)."

In the second video, the female interviewer is heard asking the man, "Agar aapko paisa diya jaye to kya aap maanenge (Would you agree to forgive the culprit if money was to be offered to you)?" The man replies, "Nahin-nahin, abhi tak to aisa hamara koi idea nahin, humko.. hamara haq kiya, hum badla maangenge, paisa ka hamara koi irada nahin (No, No, we have no such intentions so far. We were wronged; we would ask for punishment. We don't want money)."

LFHRI lawyers had earlier accused the Indian consulate in Dubai for having ignored the plight of the 17 Indians who were incarcerated in jails.