



*JPNN/ Mumbai/ New Delhi/ July 30, 2015/Relatives of Yakub Memon, a convict in the trial of the 1993 Mumbai bombings, walk out of the court after meeting Memon at a special court in Mumbai July 27, 2007. India hanged Yakub Memon on Thursday for his role in the country's deadliest bombings, which killed at least 257 people in Mumbai in 1993, after the Supreme Court rejected a desperate overnight plea to delay his execution.*

*Memon was sent to the gallows in a jail complex in Nagpur at around 7 a.m. (0130 GMT), an official in the city's police control room said. Memon, hanged on his 53rd birthday, was convicted as the "driving spirit" behind the serial blasts in India's financial capital, then still known as Bombay. He spent two decades in jail. A Supreme Court panel rejected Memon's mercy plea on Wednesday, but his lawyers again moved the court late at night, seeking a 14-day delay. The plea was rejected in an unprecedented two-hour hearing in the early hours of the morning. India's attorney general argued Memon was misusing the justice system by filing repeated mercy petitions. The case has aroused controversy because police considered Memon's brother, "Tiger" Memon, and mafia don Dawood Ibrahim to be the masterminds behind attacks designed to avenge the destruction of an ancient mosque by Hindu zealots in 1992. Both men remain in hiding. For decades India had been reluctant to carry out death sentences, but in 2012 it voted against a U.N. draft resolution for a global moratorium on executions. In November 2012, India executed a militant convicted for a 2008 attack by militant gunmen on Mumbai's landmark Taj Hotel and other targets that killed 166 people, ending what many had seen as an undeclared moratorium on capital punishment. The rights group Amnesty International, which campaigns against the death penalty, has previously called the rejection of Memon's appeal a disappointing step backwards. "The death penalty in India is arbitrary, discriminatory and is often used disproportionately against the poor," it said in a statement. (Reporting by Zeba Siddiqui in Mumbai, Aditya Kalra and Suchitra Mohanty in New Delhi;*

*Editing by Douglas Busvine and Clarence Fernandez) Reuters/Arko Datta*