

RAMPING UP PRESSURE FOR TRIAL

# India Must Build Pressure on Pak on 26/11 Again

## Mumbai Attacks (Nov 26-29, 2008)



**164**

People killed (dead included 18 police & security force personnel & 26 foreign nationals)

**308** wounded

Indiscriminate firing, throwing of grenades and bomb blasts at 13 locations including Taj Hotel, Chhatrapati Shivaji Terminus, Leopold Café, Oberoi-Trident Hotel, Narlman House

Besides 9 terrorists all Pakistani nationals killed in the operations by the security forces and 1 terrorist – Kasab was later sentenced to death – was apprehended

Direct involvement of Pakistan-based terrorist group Lashkar-e-Taiba established

### ET ANALYSIS

It's time to test Pak Prime Minister Imran Khan and his support in the deep state

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**New Delhi:** In all the excitement over the new government in Pakistan, it's important that India does not forget the 26/11 trial. In fact, that's the challenge New Delhi should present to Prime Minister Imran Khan because he is currently well-poised to deliver on this score, if he so desires.

Facts first. India has received no response whatsoever from Pakistan for over a year despite having raised the matter at the highest levels in the foreign office. It was somehow expected of India to understand the military pressure on the civilian government and the compulsions on Nawaz Sharif through the past few years.

This trial, on the other hand, moved in the opposite direction. Zakiur Rehman Lakhvi, the LeT head of operations who was arrested after the 26/11 attacks, has been out on bail for the past three years. On July 11, six other accused who were involved in the plot have moved for bail. These include Hammad Amin, Abdul Wajid, Mazhar Iqbal, Mohammed Younus, Shahid Jamil and Sufyan Zafar.

Not just that the Pakistan interior ministry has yet not submitted its report on the statements of 27 Indian witnesses. And neither has the Pakistan government ever asked India for any further help in this matter.

For its part, India took the lead and offered any assistance that Pakistan may need to prosecute those behind the 26/11 attacks. But there's been a deafening silence from Islamabad to all these communiqués and proposals.

Imran Khan doesn't carry Sharif's baggage. He's believed to have a better relationship with Pakistan's military headquarters in Rawalpindi. He also has a foreign minister in Shah Mehmood Qureshi, who suffered the embarrassment of being told to leave India because the attacks happened

while he was in Delhi on an official visit. The question is will Imran Khan use his political capital with Rawalpindi to show some sincerity in this? And will Qureshi back Imran? Or take advantage of the situation given that he's technically number two the Tehreek-I-Insaaf party.

Let's not forget the manner in which Qureshi had failed the visit of his then Indian counterpart, former external affairs minister SM Krishna, to Islamabad in 2010. He walked back on the agreement reached between the two foreign secretaries to discuss terrorism and progress in the 26/11 case. Instead, he brought in Kashmir and when the Indian side protested, Qureshi decided to end the conversation and made it public at a joint press meet, leaving Krishna quite humiliated.

India later assessed that the Pakistan military had got Qureshi to change tack after then Pak PM Yousaf Raza Gilani had assured his Indian counterpart Manmohan Singh in

### WITHOUT ANY BAGGAGE



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Sharm-el-Sheikh of Pakistan's commitment to bring the perpetrators of the Mumbai attacks to justice.

Gilani's troubles only increased after he relinquished office. His son was later kidnapped by unknown assailants in Multan in 2013. He was eventually recovered in Afghanistan three years later in what was billed as an anti-terror operation.

So, clearly, the weave beneath the surface of the new Pakistan government is quite thick, intertwined and complicated. This is the Pakistan deep state. But it also feels the compulsion to keep up the face of a civilian government.

India must test the extent of these compulsions of the deep state as well as Imran Khan's own limitations. And there can be no better way than ramping up pressure for meaningful conclusion of the 26/11 trial. After all, it's the first legally watertight case of Pakistani involvement in a big terror attack in India.