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State actors involved in 26/11 attacks: Chidambaram

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NEW DELHI: Rejecting Pakistan's contention that those behind the Mumbai attacks were "non-state actors", Home Minister P. Chidambaram has said the enormity and planning of the operation clearly indicated that they were "state actors or state-assisted". He also said a DNA test on the lone survivor, Ajmal Amir Kasab, with the man identified as his father can prove if he is a Pakistani national.

Speaking on NDTV's programme "Walk the Talk", Chidambaram said: "Somebody who is familiar with intelligence and who is familiar with commando operations has directed this operation. And that cannot be a non-state actor."

"In fact, I presume they are state actors or state-assisted actors unless the contrary is proved. It was too enormous a crime and required elaborate planning, communication networks, financial backing. It was a very, very sophisticated operation," added Chidambaram, in his first interview after the 26/11 attacks that left over 170 people dead, including 26 foreigners.

The home minister, who is expected to travel to the US next week with a dossier of evidence compiled by Indian investigative agencies on the people who carried out the attacks, maintained that the evidence against Pakistan was overwhelming.

"The evidence leads to the conclusion that the plot was hatched in Pakistan and as the operation in Mumbai was on, it was masterminded and controlled from Pakistan. When I say Pakistan, I mean Pakistani territory."

The minister who has been pro-active since he took over Dec 1 is expected to meet US Homeland Security Secretary Michael Chertoff and possibly Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice during his visit. A meeting with members of the transition team of President-elect Barack Obama is also on the cards, said ministry sources.

While in the US, Chidambaram's discussions are expected to cover a broad range including steps taken by the authorities there in the aftermath of the 9/11 attacks.

The home minister also pointed out that it was up to Pakistan to ensure that such terror acts were never repeated by its citizens against India.

"The price they will pay if this is repeated will be enormous," he warned.

Chidambaram said that a DNA test on Ajmal Amir Kasab with the man identified as his father in Faridkot in Pakistan can prove he is a Pakistani national.

"His (Kasab) DNA is available. Now, if someone matches the two, it would be clear who is right and who is wrong." Pakistan has said there is no evidence that Kasab is a Pakistani national.

The detailed dossier that Chidambaram will carry with him will include Kasab's confession to the police wherein he has reportedly given details of how he became a motivated terrorist of the Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT) from Faridkot in Pakistan's Punjab province.

It also includes records of the logbook recovered from the vessel in which the 10 terrorists came from Karachi, records of the satellite phone used by the attackers and transcript of conversations between the attackers and their handlers in Pakistan, sources said.

The dossier also includes the corroborative evidence tracking the journey of the attackers from Karachi to Mumbai.