

Pakistan dismisses Indian dossier on Mumbai attacks

● Miliband backs assertion Islamabad was not involved ● India threatens to cut off economic and cultural ties

Saeed Shah in Islamabad

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Tensions between Islamabad and New Delhi have been reignited after the Pakistani prime minister dismissed India's dossier on the Mumbai terrorist attacks as "not evidence".

India's frustration was compounded when the foreign secretary, David Miliband, declared in New Delhi that he believed the Pakistani state was not involved in the assault on Mumbai in November.

"I have said publicly that I do not believe that the attacks were directed by the Pakistani state and I think it's important to restate that," Miliband told a press conference yesterday, seated next to the Indian foreign minister, Pranab Mukherjee.

Indian ministers have repeatedly tried to link Pakistani intelligence agencies to the attack, which claimed 170 lives when 10 gunmen stormed the city, and the government threatened this week to cut off economic and cultural ties in response to what it said was Islamabad's inaction in investigating its origins.

New Delhi insists the attack was carried out by Pakistani members of the militant group Lashkar-e-Taiba, which was formed in Afghanistan but is based in Pakistan and allegedly cultivated and funded by the country's secret services.

Last week, India presented Islamabad with a dossier of the evidence it had collected about Pakistani involvement. It provided no proof, however, of the involvement of any arm of the Pakistani state, while some of the other "evidence" was circumstantial.

"All that has been received formally from India is some information," the Pakistani prime minister, Yousaf Raza Gilani, told parliament late yesterday. "I say 'information' because these are not evidence. This needs to be carefully examined. Serious, sustained and pragmatic cooperation is the way forward."

Indian officials said the dossier was meant to be a starting point for a Pakistani investigation, not conclusive evidence. They hinted that India would provide more evidence, including corroboration of its claim of Pakistani state involvement. It is understood that British and US intelligence provided some of the data in the dossier, including the phone intercepts.

India's home minister, Palaniappan Chidambaram, said this week that Pakistan was "doing nothing to assist India to bring to justice the perpetrators of the attacks" and threatened to cut off tourism, business and cultural ties.

According to media reports, two Pakistani theatre groups currently touring India have been told to go home. An unofficial ban on publications by Pakistani authors has been enforced in Mumbai bookshops, while the two hotels attacked in the city are not accepting Pakistani guests. In Pakistan, parliamentarians have called for a ban on Indian television channels.

Official trade between India and Pakistan amounts to around \$2.3bn (£1.6bn) a year, most of it flowing from India. Sourcing those goods from other countries would cost Pakistan more, and so would hurt the economy. Pakistan's most significant export to India is cement.

"Media-related, cultural, sporting and other people-to-people contacts must not be sacrificed at the altar of nationalistic fervour," said an editorial published today in Pakistan's Dawn newspaper. "Only with regular people-to-people contact will Pakistanis and Indians come to appreciate once again that they have much in common, including the shared enemy that is terrorism."

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