



A crisis of political courage
Suhas Palshikar

The Indian EXPRESS

Updated: Wed, 22 May 2013, 17:06 IST

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A hotel security official narrated in court on Thursday how he helped the National Security Guard (NSG) evacuate and sanitise Oberoi for over two days after the 26/11 terror attack. Rajesh Kadam, assistant chief security officer of

Oberoi-Trident Hotels, said, "The NSG set up four teams, each comprising one officer and four commandos. I was with the hit team, which was checking each and every room and all the floors. The operation started at 11 am on November 27. Around 5.30 pm, when we reached the 18th floor of Oberoi, and opened the door of room 1856 with the master key, the terrorists fired at us. This was the first time the NSG was able to locate the terrorists."

Since the hotel had three staircases, teams were deployed on each staircase and went up from floor to floor.

"As firing began from room 1856, the commandos took shelter and one terrorist came out of the room and said, 'Himmat hai toh bahar aao, chup chup ke kyun maar rahein ho' (Don't hide and attack, come forward to fight)', to which the NSG officer replied, 'Hum to bahar hi hai tum aandar ho' (We are outside, you are indoors)'. The terrorist then fired in the direction of the commandos and the commandos retaliated," Kadam said.

He said after a few rounds were exchanged, a terrorist was heard groaning, indicating he was hurt. Around 9 pm the sounds stopped, after which the commandos informed their temporary control room in the lobby of the developments, Kadam said. The commandos stood their ground and the operation could not be carried further as power had been switched off, he said.

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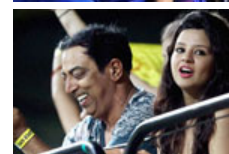
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Kadam will continue his deposition on Friday. The prosecution also played the CCTV footage from Hotel Trident in the court. Of the ten terrorists, Fahadullah and Abdul Rehman Chotta had entered Oberoi-Trident.

The court today imposed a cost of Rs 4,000 on accused Fahim Ansari as his lawyer Shahid Azmi was not present in court even after previous reminders to cross-examine a police inspector of the UP anti-terrorism squad, who had arrested Ansari in 2008 with a Pakistani passport and 10 Mumbai maps.

Thirty students of the Government Law College were in court for a one-day excursion. They keenly followed the proceedings.

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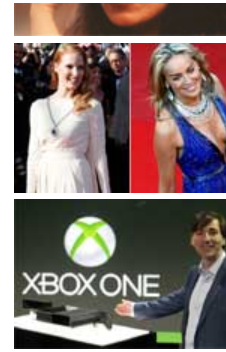


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