

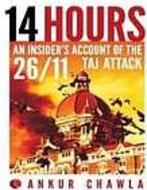
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On November 26 in 2008, a trainee at Mumbai's [Images] Taj Hotel [Images] witnessed one of the biggest terror attacks in the country. The over 14 hours he spent battling fear and terror and in rescuing and securing the safety of hotel guests are now documented in a new book by that management rookie, Ankur Chawla.

With Ajmal Kasab [Images], the only terrorist captured alive after the attacks, being executed recently, Chawla who has been haunted by the attack says his "feeling of satisfaction has no limits."

14 Hours: An Insider's Account of the Taj Attack is being released on the fourth anniversary of what is now referred to as the 26/11 attacks.

"With Kasab's much deserving death my feeling of satisfaction has no limits," says Chawla.

"I was in deep sleep on the morning of November 21, when a friend of mine called me with news of Kasab's hanging. While I started with the book I always wanted the book launch to coincide with 26/11 but his hanging was a fortunate and unexpected coincidence," Chawla told PTI.

The book published by Rupa contains personal experiences of people who survived the attacks. 166 people had lost their lives in the terror attack on Mumbai on November 26, 2008.

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Recalling the night he says, "A big boned and well muscled guy wearing a blue cap and a grey backpack hanging from his left shoulder came running inside the hotel. He squeezed the trigger of the rifle in his right hand and turned the pristine white shirt of a man into blood red with his shots. Working in a hotel, I was prepared for many things but not this."

Chawla says he believes that though justice has been done finally by hanging Kasab, the manner in which the attack was reported by the media did complicate the situation which could have been avoided.

"I was hiding in the laundry and one of my colleagues, who was watching TV at home called me up and informed about the entire 19th floor being evacuated from the staff staircase. 'Why don't you also come along or evacuate yourself,' she asked.

"Evacuation is supposed to be secretly done especially in a scenario like this. All I could realize was if she can watch this happening, even the terrorist can," said Chawla.

Chawla, who is now based in Delhi [Images] and who pursued hotel management at IHM, Shimla said that he was never too fond of reading books or writing them.

"I have moved from writing invitations for wine dinners at the Taj to writing a book to pay my tribute to those who lost their lives and to celebrate the spirit of those who survived," he said.

From making headlines at every existing media organisation to being captured as a subject of a motion picture, everything seems to have been done on the subject except a book, he said.

"I have attempted to let people know what would have been the real feelings and experiences of people that night which probably they might have just imagined through news reports" said Chawla, who was 25 years old during the Mumbai terror attack.

"I am relieved that now the memories of that night will not haunt me or make me shiver as they have been doing in past four years," concluded the author.

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Tags: Ankur Chawla, Ajmal Kasab, IHM, PTI, Mumbai

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