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CCTV footage is key to Nariman House

Wednesday, 31 December 2008 - 3:36am IST | Place: Mumbai

Baljeet Parmar

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DNA investigations show that the slain rabbi of Nariman House had installed four CCTV cameras just two months before the fatal strike of 26/11.

Though the Mumbai police and the railway authorities have made public selective CCTV footage showing different terrorists in action at the Chhatrapati Shivaji Terminus (CST), and the Trident and Taj hotels, an eerie silence is being maintained regarding Nariman House.

DNA investigations show that the slain rabbi of Nariman House had installed four CCTV cameras just two months before the fatal strike of 26/11. One camera was fitted on the first floor pointing towards the main entrance, one inside the prayer hall, the third in the dining hall and the fourth on the terrace.

While the one on the first floor was seen dangling as late as last week, there was no information about the other three as the security personnel did not allow anyone to go inside the devastated Jewish centre.

Haridas Gaikwad, a Mumbai Port Trust employee whose brother runs an electric repair shop just opposite the main gate of Nariman House, told DNA that some two months before the attack, the rabbi had approached him for the installation of CCTV equipment. "But we refused to do the work as the rabbi did not accept our quotation and someone else did the job," Gaikwad said.

"The first floor camera was positioned in such a way that it could record anyone coming in or going out of the main gate, which was also manned by a private security guard," Gaikwad further added.

In another startling revelation, Gaikwad said that he saw several persons entering and leaving the building a day before the attack, which aroused a neighbour's suspicions.

"The house used to be frequented by persons of foreign origin. We were surprised when we spotted an Indian-looking person on the evening of November 25. He was wearing casual trousers and just a vest. He came out of the main gate, smoked a cigarette and then went back inside. One of my friends observed that Indians too seem to have started staying at the house," Gaikwad said.

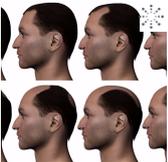
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"The very next day, November 26, at around 9.30pm, when I was standing outside my shop, I noticed two foreign-looking people and four Indian-looking men entering the house. They all were carrying dark-coloured heavy bags. While the two fair-skinned men took the lift, the other four remained behind. Within minutes, two other Indian-looking men came in. They were also carrying two heavy bags. They placed their bags next to the two earlier ones and left immediately," he added.

"At around 10pm, when we heard the first shots, we went near the house and found out that there was an exchange of fire going on at the upper floors. Some youngsters from nearby houses started throwing stones at the first floor where they had spotted some movement. I did not go with them as I was aware of the CCTV cameras and was scared that if I got caught on camera the cops would trouble me later," Gaikwad added.

Gaikwad's version was supported by several others who were witness to the goings-on that day. "We saw four Indian-looking men going inside. Now we know that there were two terrorists who got killed. The question is, where are the other two?" asked a local shopkeeper.

All this can be ascertained from the CCTV camera footage which must be available with the investigative agencies.

Knowledgeable sources told DNA that the Israeli investigators must have prevailed upon their local counterparts not to reveal anything about the Nariman House episode as it would hamper their investigations.

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