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Those 44 hours are etched in my memory

Syed Rizwanullah | TNN

Aurangabad: Those 44 unbelievable hours I spent in the darkened room no.319 of the Taj are etched in my memory forever. This is how former Nationalist Congress Party MP from Beed Jaisinh Gaikwad Patil described the events of 26/11. Gaikwad, as part of the parliamentary sub-committee on a study tour, had just checked in at Taj along with other members around 6.30 pm on that fateful day, after reaching Mumbai from Bhubaneswar.

He then called his friends and followers and one of them Balasaheb Khose Patil had gone to the hotel but left soon. Gaikwad bade goodbye to his liaison officer after asking him to report early the following day and avoided an invitation for a meal from the committee officials.

I was going through the papers related to my tour, when I heard a sound resembling that of firecrackers. When the noise continued, I enquired with the reception, only to be told to stay put in my room till I get further intimation. By then the TV channels had telecast the news strips saying two groups clash, bomb blast at the CST and possibility of four terrorists inside the Taj. I immediately contacted Balasaheb, who had by that time reached Panvel, Gaikwad told TOI on Wednesday. Around this time, the television set, air conditioner, water supply and power supply went off and the terrorists had taken control. I was left with just one-and-a-half bottle of water and three fruits. I decided to use them judiciously come what may, he recalled.

Gaikwad then contacted Rajendra, his son, telling him about the situation. Around that time I heard fire being exchanged in front of my room. The screams, firing and the blasts continued through the night. I was not frightened at all, because being an Aryasamaji I am trained to face any situation without fear of death and I kept my senses alert, Gaikwad told TOI.

I spent much of the time going through the information on my laptop about my constituency, details of my visits to various places in Beed, the names of my followers and friends and other details, during the period of semi-confinment in the Taj, he remembers.

The situation had not been brought under control even by the next evening and the terrorists were putting almost every thing on fire.

Meanwhile I had been receiving calls from my family, friends and well wishers. On 28th, I received a call that said that the TV channels were showing a strip stating that the Beed MP was stuck in room No.319 of Taj. It was very dangerous to release such information. But fortunately by that time the NSG commandos had taken control of the hotel, though minor skirmishes still continued. At 11 am on 29th, NCP chief Sharad Pawar telephoned me, saying that everything was now under control, but the authorities had to take utmost care to avoid further loss of life, Gaikwad said.

Around 2 pm, home minister R R Patil called me, saying that I should not open the door unless a commando, identified as Bharti, speaks to me in Marathi, saying Gaikwad sahib we have come to fetch you. Soon, I heard the knock but did not respond. I opened the door only after commando Bharti, accompanied by DCP Vishwas Nangre-Patil, uttered the words R R Patil had told me. I stepped out of the room, to find pieces of glass strewn all over and number of bodies scattered around. Gaikwad said that, I hope the government will ensure that there will be no 26/11 again, said the former MP, who later left the NCP to join the Shiv Sena on the eve of the Lok Sabha elections.



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