



A FACE IN THE LIFE OF RATAN TATA

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The picture says it all. Saturday was

undoubtedly a tough day for Tata Group chairman Ratan Tata. As the news came in that the siege at the Taj Mahal hotel had ended, Ratan Tata arrived at the Gateway at around 10 am, accompanied by Indian Hotels Company vice-chairman Krishna Kumar. Like hundreds of bystanders he stood at the perimeter of his out-of-bounds hotel gazing at the exquisite 105 year old building now defaced by three days of sustained assault.

Alternately he looked grim, sad, resigned. According to structural engineers and architects quoted by the news agency IANS it could take up to one year and Rs 500 crore before the Taj at Apollo Bunder can regain its majesty.

After leaving the Taj, Tata went to Chandanwadi to pay his last respects at the cremation of Captain GS Randhawa's wife Rupinder who lost her life in the attack on the hotel. Randhawa is chief of Tata's aviation wing. By evening the 70 year old was back at his hotel again, by this time the bodies had been evacuated, the rooms sanitised by the NSG, and Ratan Tata could go inside. He spent almost two hours going from floor to floor, assessing the damage to one of the finest hotels in India.

In fact, his joint-venture with AIG, which is the lead insurer for the Taj is expected to take a major hit on account of damage to the property. Apart from Tata-AIG, 30 per cent insurance cover for Taj is provided by ICICI Lombard and 5 per cent by Iffco-Tokio General Insurance. Likewise is the case for the lead insurer for Oberoi-Trident property, an Oriental Insurance Company-led consortium.

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