

[an error occurred while processing this directive]

[Home](#) - [Management](#) - [Article](#)

 [Printer Friendly Version](#)

Sections

-  [Market](#)
-  [Trackers](#)
-  [Management](#)
-  [Edge](#)
-  [Hospitality Life](#)
-  [WeekEnd](#)

Services

'Where the mind is without fear...'

Every minute brings with it stories of bravery displayed by the staff of both the hotels to ensure that their guests were safe. Some guided people to safety, some protected them, some ensured they were comfortable, and some took the bullets. This is an ode to each and every one of them.

Another cause for profound sadness has been the death of family members of employees in the attack. No words can describe the loss felt by Karambir Kang, the GM of The Taj Mahal Palace and Tower, who lost his wife and two children in the fire while he courageously stood by his guests in the banquet hall. He is now actively involved in the rebuilding of the hotel.

Then there is Devendra Bharna, executive VP, The Oberoi, who looked dishevelled and shattered on television but stood strong in what can be described as the ultimate test of his career. He was able

- ▶ [Subscribe/Renew](#)
- ▶ [Archives/Search](#)
- ▶ [Contact Us](#)

[Events](#)

- ▶ [HospitalityWorld](#)
- ▶ [TravelWorld](#)

[Network Sites](#)

▶ [Express Computer](#)

▶ [Exp. Channel Business](#)

▶ [Express TravelWorld](#)

▶ [feBusiness Traveller](#)

▶ [Express Pharma](#)

▶ [Express Healthcare](#)

▶ [Express Textile](#)

to come out safe and bring with him guests from the Trident-Oberoi. Today his challenge is to bring the two hotels back to life.

Sarita Hegde Roy, Taj's director for PR, who was trapped in Sea Lounge Café with an international television crew, also lived to tell the tale. She recalls the way the hotel staff strove to create a safe zone amidst the blasts, fire and smoke to provide water to those who were stuck as they lay on the floor of the unlit restaurant, hoping and praying.

Another Taj employee - Rajan Kamble - who eventually succumbed to his bullet wounds stood out for the way he tried to protect his guests and fought for his life till the end. There are also stories of how the staff at both hotels closed doors from outside, creating a human barrier, venturing into unsafe territories and blocking doors with tables and mattresses to prevent easy entry. Instead of escaping, they chose to stay back and guide their guests to safety.

Chef Kanda Noriyaki, who works for Wasabi at Taj, and Chef Emanuele Lattanzi of Oberoi's Vetro who was with his wife and six-month old daughter, too helped guests out from their restaurants. Chef Lattanzi says that the only thing that allowed him to keep a stable mind is the regular fire drills followed by the hotel. Such acts require immense courage and a mind that has blocked fear out.

The hospitality fraternity also mourns the death of fellow industry professionals who were present at these hotels - Ajit Chhabria and his wife Monica, who were at Trident's Tiffin and food critic Sabina Saigal Saikia. Kishor Bajaj, who owns Seijo and Soul Dish in Bandra, was also dining at the Oberoi, but managed to escape through the kitchen. Poonam Advani, wife of Shalimar Hotel owner Dinesh Advani, also managed to escape. However, her sister and brother-in-law, Lavina and Rohit Harjani, did not make it.

While Taj has listed 11 deaths, the Oberoi has mentioned loss of 10

Group
Sites

▶ ExpressIndia

▶ Indian Express

▶ Financial
Express

lives. Had it not been for the courage and presence of mind shown by these staff members, the casualties may have been much more. We remember them for their bravery.

Taj staff casualties

- Chef Vijay Rao Banja
- Gautam Singh Gosain
- Kaizad Kamdin
- Zaheen Mateen
- Faustine Martis
- Sadanand Patil
- Rahamathulla Shaukat Ali
- Boris Rego
- Thomas Varghese
- Ravindra Jagan Kuwar
- Rajan Kamble.

Oberoi staff casualties

- Jasmine Bhurji
- Maibam Prakash Gaekwad
- Sanjay Surve
- Sahunak Chemburkar
- Jirachat Kanmanee
- Ami Thakkar
- Jordan Gregory Fernandes
- Sarjerao Sadashiv Bhosale
- Wilson Benjamin Mandlik.

The industry reacts

I don't think it was a case of loopholes in the security of the hotels. It was more of a well-planned attack. Hotels are hotels; they are not protected areas and they can take security measures only up to a certain extent. It is a question of the security in the country in general.

There would be an immediate adverse reaction as had happened in New York or Jordon after the terror attacks. People will be wary of travelling to Mumbai for a while and therefore the industry will be hit hard. I think that the immediate need is to have a better communication system in place.

K B Kachru

Executive VP, Carlson Hotels

It is a major blow to the industry to witness the attacks in the two leading hotels which were landmarks in their own right. The security issue in the country in general is once again being raised. We have increased security with immediate effect. Business-wise, we haven't been impacted much by these incidents. We are ruled by the domestic market and have observed just a four to five per cent cancellation in bookings. I reckon that the impact of these attacks would be more on the luxury hotels in the country, since they cater to a fairly large number of international guests and many of them have already cancelled their bookings. I expect things to stabilise in the long run.

Vilas Pawar

CEO, Choice Hotels (India)

My first thought goes out to the people who have been the victims of these attacks. The damage to the buildings is secondary. I think the biggest lesson we have learnt from this is on the security aspect; it is of prime significance. Service and other factors are all secondary. We can no more allow easy access to the people.

On the other side, business will be deeply impacted. We were already hit by the global meltdown. The occupancy levels will be drastically hit. Considering what has happened to Mumbai, the level of confidence of leisure regions like Rajasthan and Goa would be even lower. I think this year will be a difficult one for the hospitality and tourism industries. I sincerely hope that we stay strong through troubled times and emerge stronger.

Sanjay Sethi

CEO & MD, Berggruen Hotels

"It is clear that these terrorists are against India's economic strength. We don't know whether they were staying in the hotels but no hotel in the world can do anything if people with loaded guns enter their premises. The staff did their best to save the lives of the people; some of them even sacrificed their own. No doubt there is scope for improvement in hotels as far as security is concerned but the need of the hour is to have a national

security agency in the country.

In the short run, Mumbai will be affected deeply. Already, a lot of cancellation of bookings has been witnessed as tourists are scared to come to the city and India. But the city and the country will bounce back soon."

Param Kannampilly

Chairman, Concept Hospitality

"It feels shocking that such an attack has happened in the country at a time when the economy is growing phenomenally and numerous multinational are coming to the country. I have frequently visited the two premium properties and have always been thoroughly satisfied with their security. I am amazed how the terrorists were able to enter the hotels in spite of security. I think we shouldn't blame the hotels in such a scenario. The need of the hour is to increase the security in the country in general. It was just the start of the season and such an attack would no doubt dampen people's travel plans. It would take some time before everything stabilises. I foresee a lot of outbound traffic happening during this season."

Mumtaz Moiz

GM, Club Med India

"It would be hasty to speculate on the extent of the impact on future business until the situation has been brought under control and in-depth assessments have been made. India, and Mumbai, is a favourite destination for business and leisure travellers and I believe that the reputation is well deserved and it will reassert itself once the full scope of the events is known.

Armando Kraenzlin

*Regional VP (India & Mauritius) and GM,
Four Seasons Hotel Mumbai*

"We would like to express our deepest sympathies to the victims of these horrific attacks, as well as to our industry colleagues. We have maintained security at all of our properties in India at the highest level for some time and have heightened procedures even more in the aftermath of these attacks. In Mumbai, we have further intensified physical security at our hotels and are limiting access to resident guests and authorised personnel only.

Beginning several years ago, we undertook a national overhaul of our existing emergency and crisis programmes and procedures to address

terrorism-related events as well as traditional crises.

We have made a significant investment to upgrade our emergency and crisis procedures and security measures in light of world events, understanding that travellers are ever more concerned about their personal safety, whether at home or on the road. In light of current scenario, it will not be prudent to disclose the specific security arrangements which have been rolled out. Suffice to say that we have taken every step to ensure the safety and comfort of our guests and associates.

Anil Malik

GM, ITC Hotel The Maratha

"Security is continuously evolving and being reviewed. Of course it is a priority, but then nobody anticipated such an event. This only means that hotels will now have to be more stringent and alert in ensuring that the existing security systems in their respective hotels are in perfect working order and are carried out thoroughly, right from baggage surveillance to metal detectors. We will definitely lend a helping hand in whatever way we can to the hotels affected. As part of the hotel industry, we take this loss personally and we will work together to do whatever it takes to overcome this tragedy."

Anjali Chatterjee

Head (Corporate Communications), Bharat Hotels Group

We extend sympathy to all those guests, hotel staff and security personnel who laid down their lives during sudden and unexpected attack in Mumbai. Security in the establishments including hotels has been stepped up with thorough checks. Resident room floors are prohibited for non-resident guests and the hotel is guarded by the armed local police.

Suresh Badlaney

GM, Le Royal Meridian, Chennai

Bookings in five-star hotels and inflow of foreign tourists into the country were already running low due to the global economic meltdown. With Wednesday's terror attack, the hotel industry is expected to see a rise in the number of cancellations and also a substantial reduction in tourist numbers since the terrorists have struck at the peak of the tourist season. This is for the first time terrorists have targeted hotels and foreigners.

The attacks also led to a number of meetings, conferences and exhibitions being cancelled. I feel it is that more than the financial meltdown, it's the morale of the people that has to be built up.

Punish Sharma,
GM, Rodas An Ecotel Hotel

"It is a very sorry situation and the travel advisories are out though it will be difficult to gauge its impact as there are a number of 'avid Indian fans' who would realise that terrorism is not unique to India and that anything can happen at anytime and anywhere.

The government now needs to counter these advisories with the help of effective PR campaigns worldwide. Also, the trade needs to understand the crisis situation and therefore, everyone needs to contribute and not fragment the industry further. Hoteliers have made significant profits in the last five years by selling rooms at unrealistic prices. The industry now needs to realise that it shouldn't get too greedy now and learn to eat potatoes and fix these prices so that people find value for money.

Ajay Prakash
*National general secretary,
Travel Agents Federation of India*

HRAWI has sent a message to all hotels to upgrade security and not to provide rooms to walk-in guests or FITs without proper identification. The long-term effects of these incidents will not be much, as long as we can recover fast enough. For that we need strong political will, laws, training and better equipment for the police force. The US was attacked once and they took such stringent measures that there have been no repeat attacks. We, on the other hand, have had repeated attacks in each city and still nothing has been done.

HRAWI is equipping members and imparting training to staff in co-ordination with the police department to handle such situations. We recently had a meeting with the crime branch to train staff on how to keep an eye out for suspicious movement within the hotel premises. We have requested all hotels to implement such measures with immediate effect. All hotels in the western region have decided to come together to contribute towards helping the families of the staff that have lost their lives; this fund will be raised from both hotel owners and employees and will go to the families affected.

S P Jain
President, HRAWI & MD, Pride Hotels

The government has to take initiatives to handle this situation so that the long term effects of these attacks will not be much. We at FHRAI have issued circulars to all hotels to upgrade their security systems and asked

them to install screening systems akin to those at airports.

M P Purshotoman

President, FHRAI

One must salute all those fellow hoteliers who were trapped in the crossfire and helping people at the cost of their own lives. I am proud to be part of this fraternity. When we discussed hotels, we immediately talked about the destination, hygiene, food, proximity to business centres, etc. This attack has shown us that security is more important than other things. The staff has to believe and have faith in the hotel's security and this will rub off on the guests eventually.

On our part, we have been trying to build confidence and have co-operated with the para-military forces and have helped people who wanted to leave. There are strict security measures for the hotel; the perimeter has been barricaded and everyone entering the hotel is being frisked. We have also asked the local police force to provide us support and have also hired our own armed men. There are always two department heads watching the CCTVs for any awkward movements.

Pradeep Uniyal

GM, ITC Fortune, Navi Mumbai

The image of India has taken a severe beating. The short term will see a lot of losses; this panic has seen cancellations of around 600 room nights in just two-three days. Our banquets have also been cancelled; everything combined we are seeing approximately a loss of Rs 1 crore. Even our GDS pick-up has gone completely quiet and we are down to 45-50 per cent occupancy.

We on our part have waived off all cancellation clauses.

Personally I don't think this slump will last long, because whatever said and done after a point of time business and earning a living will take precedence over everything else. Once the travel advisory is lifted within the next 15-odd days, daily lives and businesses should be back on track.

The good thing is that people are already expecting a bounce-back by New Year. We need to reassure and convince our guests to be with us. For this we need to enhance our security measures with more focus and better equipment.

Anuraag Bhatnagar

GM, Le Royal Meridien

India as a nation has faced aggression since centuries. But the spirit, morale and the bravery of our countrymen are far beyond these cowardly, disgruntled and mindless terrorists. It may affect us for a short span of time, but India will emerge strengthened, united and as a cohesive ethnic group. I am confident that the entire fraternity will put up system-oriented, structured security parameters.

Luggage scanners, surveillance cameras, frisking, sniffer dogs, the hotel's internal intelligence, strict verification of the individual during recruitment, will form part of our security measures. However, Sahara Star is poised to come up with Intelligent Security Management System (ISMS) both by means of men and material to keep the flagship hotel of Sahara India Pariwar safe and secured.

Vivek Kumar
CEO, Sahara Star

We have already sent directives to our corporate managers to add a terror-resistant process in our Operations Manual, for all our 57 properties. Personally, I shall try to do the same with our state, national and university hotel school syllabi. Every blow on tourism has only revolutionised it. The loss of our hotel and security agencies' team members shall always remain a black patch for us. The best way ahead would be to restore the industry to its original glory.

Kamlesh Barot
Director, Encore



◆ Copyright 2001: The Indian Express Limited. All rights reserved throughout the world. This entire site is compiled in Mumbai by the Business Publications Division (BPD) of The Indian Express Limited. Site managed by BPD.