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Gafoor failed to lead Mumbai cops during 26/11: Panel

Prafulla Marpakwar, TNN | Jun 15, 2009, 05:03 AM IST

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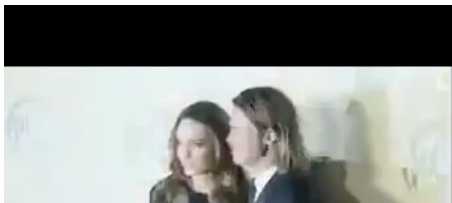
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MUMBAI: A two-member committee that investigated the police response to the 26/11 terror attacks has singled out then Mumbai police commissioner Hasan Gafoor for his complete failure to provide leadership in the hour of crisis.

Gafoor was replaced on Saturday by D Sivanandan, chief of the state intelligence department. TOI had earlier carried reports on how the committee headed by veteran bureaucrat Ram Pradhan had given the Mumbai police a clean chit, saying their actions during 26/11 had to be viewed in the context of the "war-like

situation".

The committee, however, said Gafoor completely failed to implement the standard operation procedures laid down in the Bombay Police Manual in letter and spirit. Through much of the attack, Gafoor stationed himself at one spot near the Oberoi and asked crime branch chief Rakesh Maria to take charge of the control room. Gafoor did not show qualities of leadership, the panel said. Above all, Gafoor's attitude created an impression among subordinates that they were not part of the high-level police team tackling terror.

The panel, which comprised former Union secretary Pradhan and retired IPS officer V Balachandran, also found fault with the circumstances in which the anti-terrorism squad (ATS)

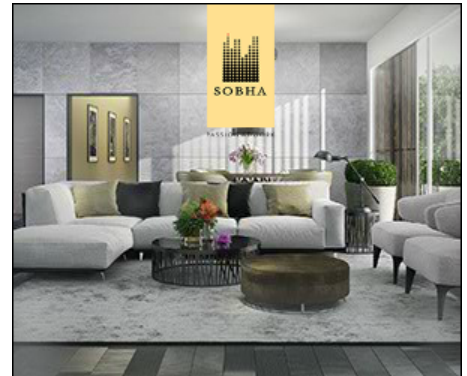
had to function besides pointing out that Taj and Oberoi hotels did not take enough note of prior warnings. Intelligence reports were processed at the state level "mechanically", the panel said.

In a comprehensive report of some 100-odd pages submitted to the government on May 27, the Pradhan panel lambasted Gafoor while giving a clean chit to then Maharashtra DGP A N Roy. The panel also showered praise on Maria for taking charge and on DCP (Zone 1) Vishwas Nagre-Patil and DCP (Special Branch) Rajvardhan Sinha for showing exemplary courage during the Taj attack.

The committee said Roy, as per the provisions of the police manual, did his job well and coordinated with senior state and Mumbai police officials even though he was not directly responsible for tackling the law and order situation in Mumbai. It pointed out that there were basic problems with the ATS being in the dual control of the DGP's office as well as the Mumbai police's office.

On the intelligence alerts submitted by the Centre, the committee observed that whether they were specific or otherwise, it was the responsibility of the Mumbai police as well as the state government to ensure that serious note was taken of these alerts and follow-up action taken. Prima facie, it appears that most of these messages were processed mechanically at the state level. However, with the situation during the attacks being war-like, it would have been difficult for intelligence or police officers to respond quickly.

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The Pradhan committee has made recommendations to help establish effective coordination between the central and state intelligence wings and between the DGP's office and the home department. It has also recommended nodal officers at the state level as well as at the DGP's office to tackle terrorist attacks and other similar situations.


On security in private establishments, the committee felt that there should be more coordination between the private sector and government and for that purpose too the government should appoint a nodal officer of the rank of DCP.

The two-member committee was appointed by then chief minister Vilasrao Deshmukh in January to examine the role of the Mumbai police in tackling terror, whether inputs from central intelligence agencies were used and what measures have to be taken in the future.

After the terrorist attack on November 26, the state's Shiv Sena-BJP opposition had demanded the removal of Roy and Gafoor from their posts and also the removal of then additional chief secretary (home) Chitkala Zutshi. The issue had rocked both houses of the legislature during the Nagpur session.

Roy's appointment as DGP was set aside in February by the Bombay High Court in a separate case and Zutshi retired a few months ago.

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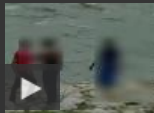
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