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26/11 – Lasting images, limited impact?

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By **Rina Chandran**
November 25, 2009



Tags:

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Ahead of the first anniversary of the Mumbai attacks, India's financial hub is on heightened alert.

Metal detectors and scanners "beep" in office blocks and malls, snipers and sniffer dogs keep guard at hotels, and barricades are in place around high-profile locations. And various talking heads have made power point presentations to show the city is now safer.

In the past year, several measures have been put in place to tighten security in Mumbai, including a hub for elite commandos, and new weapons, armoured vehicles and speedboats for the [police](#).

But how safe is the city that has been a target of bomb attacks before and remains a magnet for militants bent on hurting India's status as an economic powerhouse?

Home Minister Palaniappan [Chidambaram](#) has said India remains just as vulnerable to another attack, but that our capacity to deal with them has improved.

But some security experts say little has changed, and the fact that there have been no major attacks in the last year has little to do with India's improved ability, and more to do with the greater pressure on Pakistan. That it is only a matter of time before the [Lashkar-e-Taiba](#) launches another attack in India. That the revamping of the police

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THE POWER OF THE FEAR OF MISSING

force that is needed to secure the city has not been done.

Even in Mumbai, at the main train station where militants gunned down the most number of victims last year, door-frame metal detectors stand unmanned and bags go unchecked. And the coastline, which was easily breached by the gunmen, remains largely unprotected.

Expecting a complete overhaul of the security apparatus within a year is perhaps a tall order, but simply barricading private firms will not help if the city remains vulnerable.

In the days after last November’s attacks, thousands of Mumbai residents, stunned by the 60-hour siege of their city, took to the streets with candles, placards and slogans, demanding better governance and greater accountability.

Yet, Mumbai’s voter turnout in the national election and the recent state election was among the lowest in years.

Perhaps 26/11, as the attacks have come to be called, will also quickly become nothing more than a footnote in Mumbai’s violent history, with lasting images but little impact.

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