

26/11: As death stalked, she helped deliver life

Siddharth Kelkar Posted online: Sun Mar 08 2009, 04:00 hrs

Pune : I never imagined that I will have to see the face of death glaring at me even as I helped two women deliver babies. I cannot forget that night at Cama Hospital," says Dr Saroj Maheshgouri, superintendent of Cama Hospital, who was at the hospital during the 26/11 attack.

It was the night on which she and her team showed exemplary courage. City-based Janmada Partishthan is felicitating her on Sunday, the International Women's Day.

"I had joined duty on November 26 after 10 days' leave. As the work had piled up, I had to wait till night. Around 9.30 pm, I took a round and then went to my cabin. Some 15 minutes later I heard the gun shots. I learnt that our two guards had already fallen to the bullets of some intruders," said Dr Maheshgouri.

There were around 400 people in the building at the time of the attack. "I called my staff and told them to put off the lights. I also called the police."

In about 40 minutes, eight policemen arrived. But by then, the terrorists had reached the terrace. The police team fell prey to the bullets after an hour-and-a-half battle. "We had to conduct two deliveries. We took the two patients under the table and helped them deliver babies with the help of light from our mobile phones. Our nurses took precaution so that the babies don't cry much. In one case, the nurses had to wear plastic bags on their hands as gloves were not available."

Though the terrorists left by midnight, it was only around 3 am, after the search operation, that the hospital inmates could breathe a sigh of relief.

"I feel the felicitation is a recognition of the commendable job my staff did that night," says Dr Maheshgouri.