

India Inc beefs up security

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The recent Mumbai terror strike has been an eye-opener for all including the Indian corporate world.

A stitch in time saves nine. This is a phrase that is dawning upon most Indian firms. With the country in a constant peril, firms are looking at physical security more seriously than ever before. "There is a serious need to take a fresh look at our security paradigm," asserts Milind Sarwate, chief - HR and strategy, Marico. Indeed, the recent Mumbai terror strike has underscored a vital gap in the corporate understanding on security. "The target of terrorists has moved beyond busy markets and cramped trains, to the luxurious hotels, malls and offices," explains Prakash Prabhu, country manager, Axis Communications, a global provider of surveillance solutions.

Physical Security

While Indian firms have applied state-of-the-art security tools to safe-guard IP and technology, the same might not be true for physical security. "There may have been a widespread belief that nothing wrong will happen and if it does happen, people will take care of themselves," reasons Sarwate. "The attack has shaken organisations out of this belief and organisations will focus on physical security now," adds Sarwate.

Corroborating that, a recent 'Corporate Security Survey' by Mahindra Special Services Group revealed that only 20% of business leaders think of the national security situation, sabotage or corporate espionage as serious threats. The report also highlighted that more than 86% organisations believe that just focussing on IT can help them sustain corporate security. That's a notion most companies would have revisited after the recent turn of events.

Action Time

In fact, post the 26/11, government and corporates are likely to spend a lot more on surveillance tools. "Demand for security equipment has increased by 10-15% according to recent news reports," informs Prabhu. He further adds, "The Indian government and organisations are charting out new plans to tackle emergency situations and deploying new initiatives in disaster management."

Applies to all

The risk awareness has now increased considerably across sectors. "One sector which has begun working on security most aggressively is the hospitality sector," informs **Rahul Belwalkar, CEO, CRP, a risk mitigation consulting and solutions provider.**

"Sectors which require people and outsiders to visit official premises on a regular basis will immediately take measures to tighten physical security and risk strategy," opines **Belwalkar**. "This includes sectors like hospitality, IT & ITES, hospitals etc," he adds.

Lessons learnt

One of the key lessons coming out is that corporate India wants to ensure physical safety of their assets like offices, factories, employee quarters, etc. "In the short term, they are looking at guarding their facilities and assets," feels **Belwalkar**. "However, in the long term, they are looking for a risk free environment which includes robust processes and systems and risk consulting," he adds.

Road Ahead

Industry experts feel that corporate India should work with the government and local authorities to beef up security. "Every firm should have a security policy in place in conjunction with the agencies responsible for maintaining law and order," says Prabhu.

Another area where organisations should focus on is the tracking of uncommon threat areas. "There is a high need to explore all likely areas of risk and assign a fresh threat perception to each," suggests Sarwate. "This way the uncommon ones can be acted upon," he explains. He also feels that every firm should have a clear-cut security policy and communicate the same to all employees. "Moreover, firms must ensure that there is sufficient practice of the responses to be given during a crisis through mock evacuation drills," he asserts.

Perhaps, Indian firms could also look at training employees certain self-defence techniques. Better still, we could go on the footsteps of countries like Singapore which give compulsory military training to its youth.

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