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## Indian firms review security but hesitate at costs

12.23.08, 06:27 AM EST



By Rina Chandran

MUMBAI, Dec 23 (Reuters) - The Mumbai attack sounded a wake-up

call to Indian hotels and businesses over security and terror insurance, security experts said, but an economic slowdown and a tradition of penny-pinching could hinder improvements.

Risk management has become a major priority after the Nov. 26-29 Mumbai attacks, which killed 179 people and have been blamed on Pakistan-based militants, said Raghu Raman, chief executive of security firm Mahindra Special Services

'Until now security was a poor second cousin to everything else,' said Raman, a former army officer.

'But now, companies are making it a bigger priority and are conscious that they need to allocate more time and money to it.'

The Taj Mahal and Trident hotels, which were among 10 Mumbai sites hit in the attack, have tapped international security services firms like Israel's Ares Group which have come rushing to set up offices in India.

Taj Hotels says it has implemented initial measures such as scanners, vetting of employees and suppliers, and is deploying armed men in plain clothes at some of its properties.

'We all recognise it's a very different world in which we live,' said R.K. Krishna Kumar, vice chairman of the Tata Group, which owns the Taj Hotels. 'I believe this is a turning point for how the hotel industry views security.'

With angry rhetoric increasing between India and Pakistan, security has been tightened at hotels, airports, malls, cinemas, office blocks and apartments across India.

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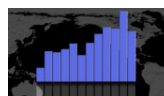
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