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How Police Pulled Off Security Feat

Identified Three Key Areas, Put Extensive Training To Use To Ensure G20 Passed Glitch-Free

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New Delhi: Two days before the G20 Summit was to begin, Delhi Police commissioner Sanjay Arora summoned around 1,000 officers to the headquarters. Everybody expected stern instructions and warnings against errors. Instead, the police chief, himself sounding calm and composed, asked the cops not to give in to pressure and to be cool-headed while making decisions. He said that whatever preparations were required were done and it was time to put the training to use.

In the event, the police personnel successfully pulled off what was termed a "security nightmare" without major glitches.

How did this happen? A special commissioner rank officer, one of those at the helm of affairs, explained, "The key was planning. We started off late last year itself with officials of the home and external affairs ministry briefing us. Once the police brass learnt what was required for an event of this scale, a blueprint was drawn up."

Three key areas were identified at the outset: carcade management, hotel security and venue management. "Managing the motorcade of one country's head is itself a tough task, handling those of around 20 countries seemed a nightmare," said another officer. "We began with extensive training alongside the central armed police forces in Noida and elsewhere."

So effective was this training that from numerous blunders in the first motorcade rehearsal, errors were brought down to single digit in the week prior to the summit and ultimately to zero during the full rehearsal.

For securing the hotels, the police brass divided the establishments in two zones with two special commissioners as their heads. A DCP-rank officer was designated as the venue commander for each hotel. Eventually, the security was so intensive that the venue commanders and the special CPs were aware of every nook and corner of each hotel.

"The venue commanders and his team knew every staffer, including chefs, managers and room boys, by face by the time the summit began," revealed another special CP. "They were even aware of which employee was positioned on which floor. A zero-area identification drive ensured there were no spots where communication signals were absent."

On the instructions of Union home minister Amit Shah, the police brass had defined roles for each personnel. "The police chief was very particular about having the right man for the right job. The home ministry even brought in a few special CPs and several DCP-rank officers to Delhi for about a month," disclosed an officer. Similarly, a joint commissioner-rank officer was put in charge of Bharat Mandapam, while another official of the same rank was made the chief of the CCTV and command room monitoring.

The Special Cell had a massive challenge of liaising with not only the Indian security establishment, but also foreign agencies. "Nothing was done as a formality. The snipers deployed trained in things like shooting in night scenarios at Shivpuri, Madhya Pradesh. Marks-women were placed on hotel rooftops only after training," said an officer. The cops, used to giving updates on WhatsApp, also resorted to secure wireless-set communication.

At a gathering on Monday, commissioner Arora said, "The success of the event has driven home one conclusion: everything became possible due to the shared sense of pride and ownership. I struggle to find the right words to express my appreciation to all of you for your competence, sincerity, capability and meticulous execution, which made the G20 arrangements look easy when it was actually complex and multidimensional."

The team spirit was in evidence when even an ACP-level officer, in charge of deployment at G20, received accolades from the brass during the gathering.

SECURING THE SUMMIT

How Delhi Police managed the security arrangements at G20



Early Planning

- Presentations by ministry of external affairs started late last year
- Extensive briefings done, blueprints prepared

Defined Roles

- Officers of all ranks were clear about their roles and tasks
- Police chief was particular about having 'the right man for the right job', did not only go by postings
- Last moment import of a few special CPs and DCP rank officers from outside Delhi helped
- DCPs were posted as venue commanders, special commissioners as chief of verticals
- Hotels where dignitaries were to stay were brought under special commissioner-rank officials
- A joint commissioner-rank officer was made in charge of Bharat Mandapam, another official of the same rank was made the chief of CCTV and command room monitoring

Extensive Training

- Multiple rounds of carcade training in Noida with Central Armed Police Forces
- Extensive 'night firing' training of snipers in Shivpuri, Madhya Pradesh
- Liaison with domestic and foreign security, and intelligence officials gave an edge

Rehearsal Till Perfection

- 'Practice makes one perfect' was the motto and followed to the teeth
- From a plethora of blunders in the first carcade rehearsal, errors were brought down to single digit in the week prior to summit, and eventually to zero
- Hotels were frequented several times by chiefs; zero area identification was the focus
- Used to WhatsApp updates, cops resorted to secure wireless set communication