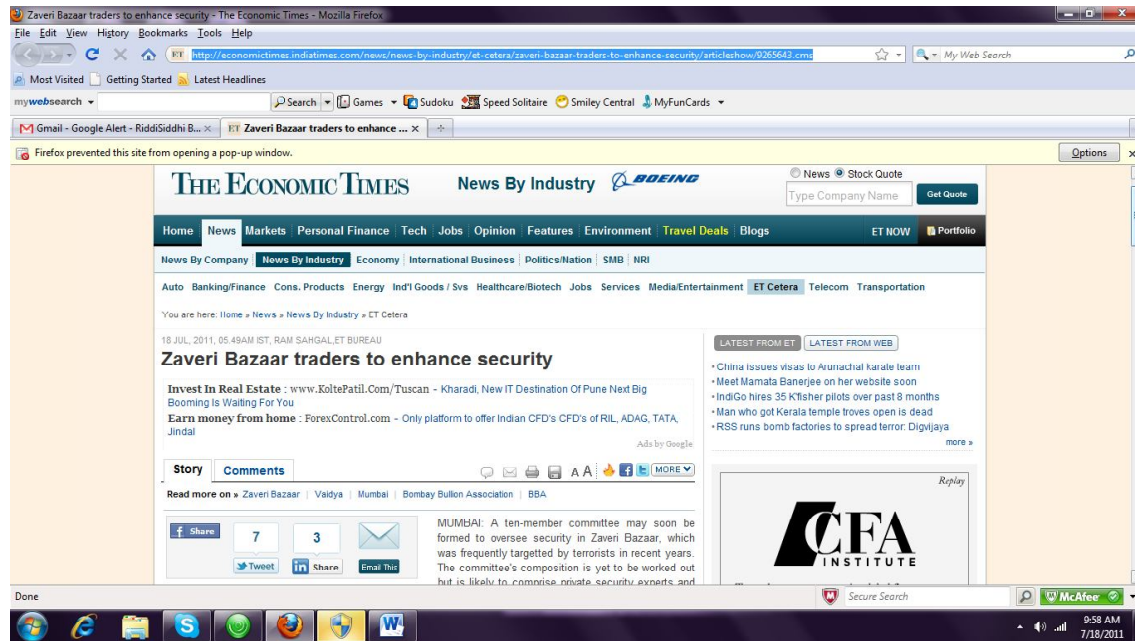


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Zaveri Bazaar traders to enhance security

MUMBAI: A ten-member committee may soon be formed to oversee security in Zaveri Bazaar, which was frequently targetted by terrorists in recent years. The committee's composition is yet to be worked out but is likely to comprise private security experts and senior Bombay Bullion Association (BBA) board members, a BBA official said. "The trade is meeting up with Arup Patnaik, Mumbai police commissioner, and will exchange notes (with the police) on beefing up security at Zaveri Bazaar," said Bhargav Vaidya, director and a spokesperson of the 350-member BBA, on Saturday.

"We have discussed the formation of a security committee... a 10-member committee proposal was okayed by most of those present at the meeting though its composition and strength will be decided shortly." A BBA meeting convened a day after the recent blast was attended by bullion dealers, pearl and imitation jewellery market traders, representatives of Bengali craftsmen and jewellers.

The meeting saw many venting their spleen at the "apparent indifference" of traders to illegal

parking and hawking in the one-kilometer radius market. But the BBA and other association members who chaired the meeting eventually decided that trader security would be best handled by specialists. The only security apparatus at Zaveri Bazaar has been the installation of around 32 closed circuit tv (CCTV) cameras monitored by a BBA-hired employee.

However, half of these may not be functioning optimally for want of electrical outlets or construction of awnings outside shops which blocked the camera view, according to Haresh Kewalramani, a silver items manufacturer and a BBA director. But Vaidya told ET that once a security committee was formed, it would become possible to install more CCTV cameras, metal detectors at nodal entry and exit points to the market, and tackle the nuisance of illegal parking and hawking.

A relocation of diamond traders from Opera House to suburban Mumbai's Bharat Diamond Bourse, 15-km away from the city, may also provide an opportunity for some traders to move from Zaveri Bazaar there, according to Suresh Hundia, BBA's past president. Hundia added that despite record high gold prices over Rs 23,000 a tola, scrap supplies had not increased after the blast because of overarching security concerns among people.

"I think scrap supplies could pick up in a week or two, after people regain confidence and come to the market," Hundia, said. The 200-yearold Zaveri Bazaar transacts 70% of the country's wholesale bullion trade, estimated at around Rs 15,000 crore a year. Apart from top bullion dealers like RiddiSiddhi Bullions, Raksha and Pushpak, a number of Bengali goldsmiths and craftsmen, it is home to reputed jewellers like TBZ The Original and Bherumal Shamandas.