

Train robbery victim dies 2 days after fall

GRP Forms 5 Teams, 7 Suspects Rounded Up

George Mendonca & Nitasha Natu | TNN

Mumbai: Two days after she was pulled off a local on the trans-harbour line by a stick-wielding robber, Aarti Gholapkar succumbed to her injuries at a Thane hospital on Saturday evening. Gholapkar was comatose ever since she was brought to Criti Care Hospital with severe damage to her brain. Her traumatized family had planned to shift her to another hospital in Chiplun, which is their hometown.

Gholapkar's death has shaken up the Government Railway Police (GRP) who have gone into an overdrive to trace the culprit. Five teams have been formed—two by the railway crime branch and three by the rest of the force. At least seven suspects, one of them with a criminal record, have been rounded up for questioning. The GRP has got some vital leads from one of them, who was detained from Mum-

TIMES VIEW: This death is yet another example of how unsafe Mumbai has become; it's as if the common citizen is not secure anywhere. The police force may be stretched and it may not be possible to secure every unfrequented zone, be it an unused mill or a stretch of railway tracks. But the sheer frequency of the attacks, the extent of violence and the audacity with which they are carried out lead to a perception of gradual breakdown of law and order.

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Gholapkar was travelling on the footboard of a Thane-bound local on Thursday evening when a man, wielding a stick with a hook, tried to knock off her handbag as he stood on the tracks. After Gholapkar lost her balance and fell, he stripped off her ornaments as well as handbag and left her bleeding profusely.

"The incident took place around a kilometre from Rabale station. There is no fencing or boundary wall at the spot where Gholapkar fell. While there is a nullah on one side of the tracks, the other side has a walkway that leads to the highway. We cannot rule out the possibility of the accused being a drug addict. He may have entered from the walkway and used the same route to exit," said a senior official.

LOCAL HORROR ENDS IN TRAGEDY



VICTIM SUCCUMBS

> Aarti Gholapkar succumbed to her injuries around 7pm on Saturday. She did not respond to treatment as her brain was severely damaged with multiple haemorrhage



STATUS OF INVESTIGATION INTO GRUESOME CRIME

> GRP and the railway crime branch have formed five squads, two of which are crime branch teams

> At least seven suspects, one of them with a criminal record, have been rounded up for questioning

> GRP has got vital leads from one of the suspects who was

detained from Mumbra

> GRP are scanning the records of habitual offenders and laying traps in the surrounding slums

> They have also activated their network of police informers

> Cops believe the robber may have operated alone

Vashi GRP Numbers

> Working strength of Vashi GRP is around 100 personnel
> Jurisdiction starts from Govandi and extends till Seawoods, besides the stretch from Vashi to Rabale
> Five home guards have been provided to Vashi GRP

Kurla victim's son unable to cope

> It is more than two years since Kurla resident Daksha Gugal (34) died after falling off a local in 2011, but her son Ritik (now 13) has not been able to cope with her death. "He has been doing poorly in his studies and tries to keep away from us," said Naresh, Daksha's husband. Ritik witnessed the incident



Dr Santosh Rath, the neurosurgeon treating Gholapkar at Criti Care Hospital, told TOI that she passed away around 7pm. "The diffuse axonal injury to her head had resulted in an injury to her brain stem. She was not responding to the medicines as her brain was severely damaged with multiple haemorrhage. Ever since she was admitted to the hospital, she was in coma. An autopsy will be carried out before handing over the body to her family," Rath said.

Gholapkar's colleague, Chhaya Pokharkar, who witnessed the incident, told TOI, "I'm saddened by her tragic death. Aarti was a self-made and independent woman who believed in earning on her own and not depending on family members. She was well-aware

of her responsibility towards her teenage daughter."

On the day of the incident, Gholapkar had been warned against travelling on the footboard by her colleagues, but in vain. "Aarti reasoned with us, stating that proximity to the entrance of the compartment would help her alight quickly at Thane and avoid the rush on the foot overbridge to change trains for Dombivli where she lived," an officer said.

Vashi GRP have converted the case of 'robbery with assault' to that of 'murder'. "We are scanning records of habitual offenders, laying traps in slums in the periphery of the tracks on the trans-harbour line and have activated our network of informers," said senior inspector P Karyakarte, Vashi GRP.

Pvt Colleges Hardest Hit As New Grads Move Away From Taking Up Teaching

Hemali Chhappia | TNN

Mumbai: Teacher-training colleges across the state are facing a shortage of students. When admissions closed on Saturday evening, institutes realized that classrooms would have to run half-empty—an indication that the teaching profession is in decline.

Close to 40% seats in state colleges running the Bachelor of Education (BED) programme are unfilled. The vacancy is more pronounced in private colleges, where every other seat is empty.

The state has a total of 362 colleges offering the three-year BED programme. Merely 12 government colleges

and 38 aided institutes have not had trouble filling their seats.

But, for the private colleges, irrespective of which part of the state they are located in, this has been their gloomiest admission season. Only 22,569 students have taken admission. Of the 35,660 seats, 13,091 are vacant.

Arundhati Chavan, Principal of Swayamsiddhi College of Education, Thane, who is on the exam committee, said that over time the number of students had been falling and it was reflective of the reality that the state did not have jobs for so many fresh graduates.

"Private colleges claim that they are going to find it difficult to run classes if so many seats are left vacant," said a senior officer in the education department that conducts the BED CET (common entrance test). "These colleges have suggested that either they should be permitted to hold a college-level test to admit more students or the state must conduct one more CET."

He said that last year, close to 5,000

4-day school vacation this Ganeshotsav

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

Mumbai: Students from several city schools will get to enjoy a mini vacation this Ganeshotsav.

The education department on Saturday decided to give a four-day holiday in the region from Monday by reducing the number of days schools are closed during other vacations.

A circular to the effect was issued by the BMC education department, which regulates primary schools in the city, and the deputy director of school education, which covers secondary and higher secondary education.

"We haven't declared new holidays but adjusted two holidays from the Christmas vacation, December 23 and 31, to accommodate these holidays," BMC education officer R Bhise said.

The circular from the regional deputy director's office stated that the holidays may be adjusted with the summer and Diwali vacations in schools.

The academic calendar is decided by the education department at the beginning of the year and includes a holiday list. The changes were introduced this week after demands and protests from the Maharashtra Navnirman Vidyarthi Sena.

Not all schools had received the order on Saturday.

'Onion prices to stay high till Sept-end'

Mumbai: Wholesale traders at the APMC now say onion prices will remain high until September-end. They claim the "arrival of the new crop has been delayed due to excess rain".

On August 15, these middlemen as well as state government officials had promised that prices would normalize in a fortnight. Yet onion prices continue to remain Rs 55-60 per kg in retail markets. "A heavy shower last month has delayed the new crop," said Ashok Walunj of APMC. On August 15, he had said sowing began early this year, so things would normalize once the new crop arrived in September first week.

Meanwhile, on Saturday, the latest fair price onion store was inaugurated at the home of state agriculture minister Radhakrishna Vikhe-Patil in Sagar, Malabar Hill. Members of the public were invited there to buy vegetables for Rs 30-40 per kg, an average of Rs 20-40 less than the market rate. Yet, onions sold for Rs 48 here too. "The wholesale rate remains Rs 49. We are trying our best to sell at optimum rates," said an official.

"Everybody knows this artificial shortage is caused by hoarders. Yet the government denies this," said Vishwas More from Lalbaug.—Bella Jaisinghani

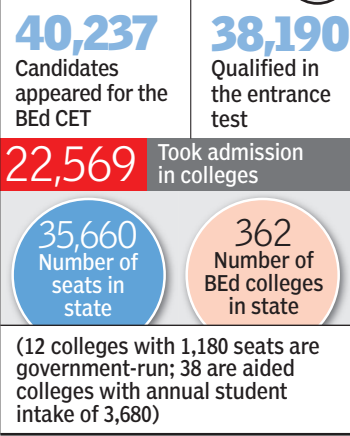
Dubai sr citizen found dead in Chembur hotel

Mumbai: A senior citizen from Dubai was found dead in a Chembur hotel room on Saturday. The deceased, Al Manir Obaiz Khabis (65), came to Mumbai on September 1. He had been staying in a room at Pearl hotel near Chembur station. He was in the city to meet his relatives, who stay in Cheetah Camp, Trombay, the police said.

"The deceased's nephews came to meet him at the Pearl hotel, but got no response. They informed the hotel authorities, who broke the door open and found Khabis' body on the floor outside the bathroom," an officer said, adding, Khabis had severe diabetes. "It appears that he came out of the bathroom when he slipped and fell." TNN

No takers for 40% BEd seats in state

FIGURE IT OUT



seats had gone unfilled even after the state permitted admission of students who had not taken the entrance test.

But the move was challenged in court, and this year the option of filling

Family of 4 among 9 killed as speeding bus crashes into SUV

Pradeep Gupta | TNN

Thane: Nine people died and over 22 injured, after a speeding tourist bus ramed into an SUV on the Mumbai-Agra highway, near Shahapur, on Saturday evening.

The driver of the Shirdi-Mumbai Neeta Travels bus was reportedly speeding, survivors claimed, despite being repeatedly cautioned by passengers to slow down. Near Shahapur, he tried to avoid a motorcycle coming from the opposite direction but couldn't control the bus which hit the divider, overturned and then dashed against an Innova coming from the opposite side on Mumbai-Agra highway near Shahapur on Saturday evening. All occupants of the Innova were killed on the spot, along with five passengers of the bus. Over 22 people were injured. The bus driver fled the scene after the incident.

Eight of the deceased were identified by police as Gauri Raman (55), Soniya Jain (30), Vaibhav Mahadik (12), Kunjal Mahant (20) and four members of a Navi Mumbai-based family travelling in the Innova—Anooj Dubey (54), his wife Sangeeta (50), Kiran (25) and son Suraj (23). The bus had 20 tourists from Delhi's

SPEED THE KILLER, AGAIN



- > At 11.30am,** around 50 tourists boarded a Neeta Travels bus for Mumbai, at Shirdi
- > Alarmed by his rash driving,** passengers thrice requested the driver to slow down, but he reportedly brushed aside their concerns
- > Around 4pm,** near Shahapur, the driver suddenly saw a motorcycle coming from the wrong side. To avoid him, the speeding bus swerved right, lost control and dashed into the divider. It overturned to the other side of the road, hitting an SUV coming from Mumbai



The bus jumped the divider and hit an SUV (above) on the other side, crushing all its four occupants inside. Locals helped take the injured (below) to hospital



- > All four members of a family in the SUV** were killed on the spot, five bus passengers also died
- > Locals informed police and helped take the injured** to hospitals in Shahapur and Thane

Chandni Chowk, including Soniya. Her husband Navin however survived. Five of the injured were stated to be critical. The Delhi tourists planned to stay in Mumbai for a darshan of Lalbaugcha Raja.

Mahesh Sharma, one of the tourists from Delhi said, "After we boarded bus at 11.30am in Shirdi, the driver was going at full

speed. Passengers complained three times but the driver said 'nothing will happen'."

Police were alerted by locals who also helped rush victims to the Shahapur Gramin hospital and other private hospitals in Thane. Most bus passengers were Mumbai residents and were returning after a darshan at the Sai Baba temple.

B R Bhor, deputy superintendent of police, Murbad region said, "Primary investigation shows the bus driver took a right to save the motorcyclist but lost control and hit the divider; then overturned to the other side where it the Innova coming going towards Nashik. The motorcyclist too was and was admitted to hospital."

Fewer PCOs lead to sharp drop in distress calls on child helpline

Namita Devidayal | TNN

For the longest time, most calls that came to Childline would be from a kid on a railway platform asking for help after a brutal police beating or desperately looking for shelter. But the decline of public call offices (PCOs) across the country have led to a sharp drop in calls from marginalized children to India's first toll-free helpline for children in distress. The decline in PCOs is due to the proliferation of mobile phones, which are not available to these children.

The number of PCOs across India have come down from 22 lakh in 2008 to 10 lakh in 2012, making the once-ubiquitous public phone booth into an object valued more for its quaintness than utility. However, for a vast section of children, that one rupee call could potentially transform despair into hope.

Childline, a government-funded body, has been fielding calls at all times of day and night since 1996, from children who live in streets, slums, or railway stations, reporting any thing from abuse, illness, or the absence of the most basic things like food and shelter. Nishit Kumar of Childline says, "These children need access to a phone

more than any one else. If a runaway child calls from a bus depot calls saying he doesn't know where to go, and you manage to reach him, you are actually putting him out of harm's way. The window of opportunity to rescue a girl-child who has just arrived at a railway or bus station is about ten minutes. After that, its over."

While in 2009, 10% of all distress calls came from PCOs, in 2012 the number had fallen to 1%. Meanwhile, calls from landlines in middle-class homes has been going up. Social workers question the validity of a service that addresses a child calling and saying, "I don't want to go to school because I don't like my maths teacher" versus the needs of a severely marginalized orphan who doesn't have even basics like food, shelter and medical help in place. "While the former is also important, this cannot be ignored," says Kumar. "These children do the crucial service of calling for help when other children are in distress. So, if we take over phones, they

would not be able to tell us what's happening."

The solution to the problem is to install dial-free phones (the childline hotline number is 1098) in different public spaces. These instruments would have no dialing facility, thereby preventing misuse. Childline, and its parent body, the Ministry of Women and Child Development, have made repeated requests to the Railway Board to give them five square feet of space on the walls of station platforms, but there has been no response. The railways is by far the largest transporter of children who are either trafficked or are runaways and access from stations to a helpline is critical.

Ironically, India was the first country in the world to ratify the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child which, among other things, prescribes that children have a right to access help. A helpline is the first and most basic conduit towards child protection.



Check CR local status online in a month

Manthan K Mehta | TNN

Mumbai: Central Railway commuters will be able to track real-time location of trains across the suburban network on a dedicated website—trainenquiry.com—or the pan-India train inquiry number 139 within a month. The information will help commuters alter their travel plans if there is a delay in or cancellation of a preferred service.

The project, which is nearing completion, will come as a relief to lakhs of CR commuters. The CR suburban network operates around 1,618 services per day on all its three lines—main, harbour and trans-harbour.

Commuters will not just be able to track a train's exact location but also the preceding

TRACKING THE LOCAL

Real-time monitoring of suburban services will start in a month

- > This is how it will work** | Each local train has been provided with a unique five-digit code. On entering this code on the site trainenquiry.com or dialling the train inquiry number 139, the commuter will be able to track the local's location
- > As of now,** passengers can track long-distance trains

- > Currently,** CR has installed a train management system (TMS) that provides arrival status of suburban services through indicators and announcements at platforms
- > CR runs a total of 1,618 services.** It has already completed integration of 1,596 services



and following two stations.

It is the Control Office Application (COA) that currently monitors the movement of long-distance trains across the country in real time through a computer-aided interface. It

was developed by the Centre for Railway Information System (CRIS)—the information technology arm of Indian Railways. The COA enables passengers to track the movement of both scheduled and

unscheduled trains on the website or on 139.

CR divisional general manager Mukesh Nigam said, "Till now, one can only track the movement of long-distance trains because the suburban network is not completely integrated with the COA."

Nigam further said he was keen on this integration to capitalize on the use of mobile phones. Moreover, in a busy city such as Mumbai, commuters would benefit from updated information on trains, he said.

The suburban network is a challenging task, Nigam said, as certain stretches run on four corridors while long-distance trains operate on two. The average frequency of services on the main line is five minutes and harbour line five minutes.

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