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School van driver sexually assaults 3-yr-old

3 Months Ago, School Owner's Kin Abused Her

George Mendonca & Vijay Singh | TNN

Navi Mumbai: A school van driver has been arrested for allegedly sexually assaulting a three-and-a-half-year-old girl inside the vehicle while dropping her home on Friday. This is the second time that she has been abused in the last three months. The child, a student of a CBSE school in Kharghar, was first allegedly sexually assaulted in August by the brother-in-law of the institution's owner and his accomplice but the incident was not reported to the police at that time.

Even after the assault last week, the girl's mother and grandmother were initially hesitant to approach the police. Finally on Sunday, they lodged a complaint, following which the driver, Vakil Mahato (28) from Kopra village, was arrested that night.

"The girl's mother, who

BEWARE OF PREDATORS

TWIN TORTURE

Aug | The school van was parked near Pandavkada waterfall when the girl was allegedly sexually abused by the school owner's brother-in-law and his aide

Nov 21 | The girl was allegedly abused by driver Vakil Mahato on the school van

LAW

Protection of Children from Sexual Offences Act, 2012

Any person who penetrates a child's private parts with his private organ or finger or parts of his mouth will be charged with rape. The punishment ranges from fine, three years in jail to life imprisonment. Any person who does not report an offence or fails to record it, is also liable to imprisonment for up to six months or fine or both



What To Look Out For

- Parents must ensure that a female attendant is always present on a school bus
- They must observe if the child's behaviour suddenly changes; they should gently ask the child about it
- Parents must patiently listen to a child if he/she struggles to talk of something disturbing

Recording Kid's Statement

- A child's statement must be recorded at home or at a place of his/her choice, preferably by a woman cop not below the rank of a sub-inspector
- No child to be detained at the police station at night
- Cops cannot be in uniform while recording a child's statement
- No aggressive questioning
- The statement has to be recorded as spoken by the child
- Help of an interpreter or translator or an expert can be taken, depending on the child's need
- Medical test of a child has to be done in the parents' presence or any other person whom the child trusts; for a girl, the test has to be done by a woman doctor

TIMES VIEW: It is a matter of great concern that such crimes have been recurring despite repeated orders by the authorities to schools and bus operators to put safety measures in place. The situation calls for a problem-solving mentality, not one of stonewalling. After all, it is the safety of our children that is at stake, nothing less.

ents and they too, did not lodge a complaint, fearing social stigma. Those two have now been named as accused," Yenpure said, adding a hunt was on to track them down.

When TOI visited the school, it was shut down; no one from the management was available for comment and the mobile number mentioned on the school board was switched off.

Darekar said while the complaint was being taken down on Sunday, advocate Vinod Gangwal demanded a prompt action, alleging deliberate attempt by the authorities to shield the accused. He reportedly started video-graphing as the girl's mother gave her statement when police seized his mobile.

works as a domestic help, said around 1.30pm on Friday, Mahato sexually assaulted the child while on his way to drop her home. He has been booked on the charge of rape," inspector Sunil Darekar said. DCP Sanjay Yenpure told TOI: "The van

did not adhere to any RTO rules laid down to ensure a child's safety aboard a school vehicle. Flouting all norms, the van did not have a woman attendant, there was no CCTV camera and even the van was not painted in mandatory yellow." The

school had employed the driver to ferry playgroup and pre-primary kids. Panvel RTO Arun Yeola said they would revoke the van permit and suspend the driver's licence. Yenpure added Mahato had revealed to them that the school

owner's brother-in-law and his aide had sexually abused the girl three months ago. "The van was parked near the Pandavkada waterfall when she was assaulted by the two. But at that time, the girl could not properly narrate her ordeal to her par-

Post office agent steals ₹91L through fraudulent accounts

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Mumbai: A post office agent has been booked for opening fraudulent accounts of several clients of the Mahim post office (banking division) and siphoning off Rs 91.14 lakh from them in the last few months.

Accused Umesh Doshi (46), along with his accomplice, Parash Parekh, reportedly convinced the victims—several businessmen and residents of south and central Mumbai—to open new accounts, saying a circular had been issued to open fresh accounts where their invested money will be deposited directly after maturity. Once he accomplished that, Doshi transferred the principal sum from the victims' real post office accounts to the fraudulent ones.

The case was registered after the Mahim post office lodged a complaint on November 19 on behalf of the account holders. DCP Mahesh Patil confirmed about the fraud. Officials from the post office also confirmed about the embezzlement but declined to comment. The accused are on the run.

The fraud came to light in August when the post office's divisional inspector Sakshi Pujari received complaints from seven clients that their accounts showed no money though the schemes had matured. The first complaint came from a Cumballa Hill businessman, Ratan Tata, who lost the maximum amount of Rs 40.17 lakh; among the other victims, most of them from Mahim, is Matunga Road resident Sanjay Modi who lost Rs 14.64 lakh.

"The post office found out that Doshi withdrew the principal sum immediately after he got hold of the account holders' signatures on new account opening and closing forms," said a Mahim police officer. The FIR

SWINDLE SAGA

Post office agent Umesh Doshi convinces seven account holders of the Mahim post office that a circular has been issued instructing them to open new accounts where their invested money will be directly transferred on maturity

He takes their signatures on different forms

Doshi opens the fraudulent accounts with their signatures and transfers the principal sum from their original accounts

and the confession letter from the accused, which TOI has the copies of, showed the post office called Doshi for an inquiry in September when he confessed to the embezzlement. "Doshi said he had committed the fraud after opening fraudulent accounts of victims with their real signatures and withdrew their money. He also mentioned no post office staffer was involved and promised to return the money by December 31," said an officer. "But, now he has gone into hiding."

The victims told the police they trusted Doshi as he had been collecting money for different post office schemes such as saving account and recurring deposit. "Once one investment scheme matured, we would ask Doshi to deposit the money into a new scheme for which, we would sign on application forms. Doshi misused our signatures to open new accounts with our names and siphoned off the money"

AI flight delays hit as many as 50k flyers in Oct; monthly average is 25k across carriers

Airline Blames 'Technical Problems' For The Unusually High Number

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Air India appears to have touched a new low in October as more than 50,000 of its passengers were hit by flight delays. It's an abnormal number as, on an average, across all Indian carriers, including Air India, around 25,000 passengers are affected due to delayed flights each month.

A total of 62,011 passengers who booked domestic and international flights on Indian carriers were hit by flight delays beyond two hours in October. Of these, 50,773 belonged to AI alone, stated Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA) data. In September, a total of 24,250 passengers were hit and 18,346 were AI passengers (see box). The trend was the same for the earlier months with AI contributing the highest percentage of passengers hit by flight delays.

The national carrier, which is the third largest airline in terms of domestic market share, flew around 17 lakh passengers, domestic and international included, that month. So, three out of every 100 passenger who flew AI were stranded at airports during the busy Diwali festive season travel. In comparison, only 0.2% of passengers who booked on private carriers were hit by flight delays in October.

AI then was also the airline that spent the most—Rs 67 lakh—on its flyers affected by delays. The amount went towards providing refreshments, rescheduling and refunds in cases where passengers cancelled their booking. This apart, in October, owing to its chaotic flight schedules, the national carrier spent Rs 38 lakh towards compensation for passengers whose flights were cancelled. The highest spend was Rs 73 lakh, though, which went towards hotel accommodation, refunds and so on, provided to pas-

sengers who had confirmed bookings, but were denied boarding. The ailing airline, thus, spent a total of Rs 1.8 crore as compensation to its affected passengers.

From July to October, AI spent a total of Rs 1.4 crore towards compensation and allied expenses arising out of flight delays. Rs 1.2 crore for denied boarding, and Rs 1.3 crore for flight cancellations. The total AI spend on all these categories for the four-month period is Rs 3.9 crore whereas for all the other carriers put together, the corresponding figure is Rs 1.3 crore.

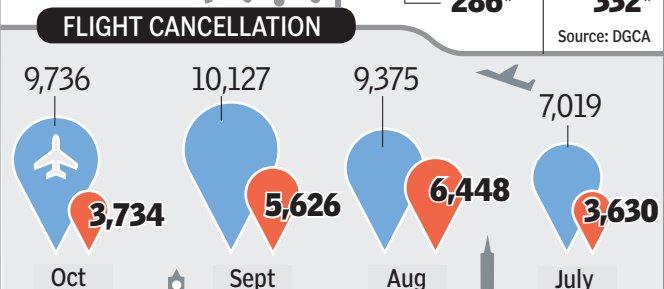
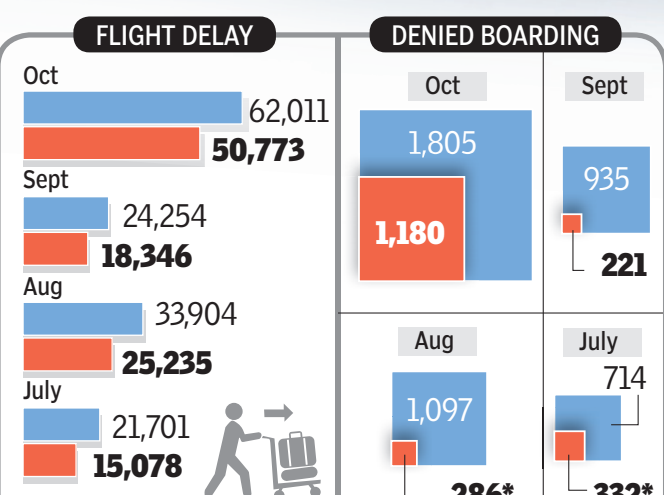
An airline source said: "The airline's functioning was mismanaged on a number of fronts. What peeved the passengers the most was when it withheld information on their flight status," said an airline source, referring to the few instances in the last week of October where disgruntled passengers verbally abused AI ground staff.

An AI spokesperson said, "The recent disruption in performance was mainly because of technical problems with engines, which resulted in fewer aircraft being available for operations. This has been rectified since and the number of aircraft available has increased, thus restoring the schedule." The official added that during the interruption, AI operated wide body aircraft such as Boeing 777 and 787 from Mumbai to clear the festive traffic. "AI also plans to strengthen the customer care centres so that these eventualities are addressed promptly and effectively. In order to improve connectivity between the metros, AI plans to induct more of the Boeing 787s to provide passengers with the ultimate comfort in flying. Despite these interruptions and combination of flights, AI topped the airlines in October in having the highest load factor of 83.5%."

AI had the largest percentage



Total: All Indian carriers, including Air India
* In July and August, Jet Airways had the largest number of passengers who were denied boarding with 382 and 811, respectively



of affected passengers in the three categories, except in the month of July and August, when Jet Airways had the largest number of passengers who were denied boarding. In August, 811 Jet passengers were denied boarding against 286 of AI. In July, Jet denied boarding to 382 passengers and AI 332.

Flight attendants refuse to work beyond duty hrs

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Mumbai: Air India's troubles with getting their flights to depart on time seem to have much to do with the manner in which they schedule their flight attendants' duty.

While the aviation regulator's norms dictate that a flight attendant should not be rostered for more than 1,000 hours of flight duty in a year, the national carrier seems to be doing just that. "Around 30-40 of the 400 flight attendants based in Delhi who work on narrow-body aircraft such as A320 and A319 are currently being rostered for flight duty though they have crossed the maximum 1,000 hours-a-year duty limit," said an airline source. These are the flight attendants on AI's domestic network and on flights to Singapore, Bangkok, Islamabad, Kathmandu, among others. Several of them refuse flight duty as it amounts to violating DGCA norms, said the source and added that it was one of the reasons for AI's flight delays.

On the other side are flight attendants who can be legally rostered for flying, but the airline does not do so. "Even a cursory glance would reveal that those in charge of crew-scheduling punish some flight attendants by consistently rostering them on all-night flights with three to four take-offs/landings. The favoured lot gets flights from Delhi to Bangkok and Singapore with night halts," the source added. TOI has a copy of the list of names of AI flight attendants who were rostered between November 11 and 17 on narrow-body aircraft. The column of duty hours they have completed so far shows 14 of the rostered flight attendants with over 1,000 hours of flight duty completed in the past 365 days and another 29 who have done over 950 hours.

An Air India spokesperson refuted the allegation. "No crew is rostered for more than 1,000 hours a year. We strictly go by DGCA norms in rostering of the crew. However, everyone cannot fly equally as there are medical, leave and training requirements to be met. On an average, utilization of the crew is up to 70 hours a month. All active crew are allotted flying duties and there is no imbalance in the allotment of flying duties to the crew."

Complete Salman Khan 2002 hit-and-run trial by Dec: Court

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Mumbai: The trial in the hit-and-run incident involving actor Salman Khan has been on for more than a decade, it should be completed by December, observed a sessions court on Monday. Judge D W Deshpande also expressed displeasure over the actor's absence in court during proceedings. "I remember I had directed the accused to remain present today," the judge said. But the court granted the exemption plea filed by the defence.

But on December 3, Khan will have to be present in court when two witnesses, a chemical analyzer and a motor vehicle inspector will depose. Reacting to the prolonged arguments over making available the list of witnesses who were to depose in the next hearing, the judge remarked, "All this is diverting from evidence."

Defence advocate Srikrant Shinde complained to the court that despite an earlier order, the prosecution had

IN THE DOCK

On Sept 28, 2002, actor Salman Khan allegedly rams his Land Cruiser into American Express Bakery on Hill Road in Bandra, killing one and injuring four pavement dwellers.

Khan is charged under IPC sections 304-II (culpable homicide not amounting to murder; it attracts maximum punishment of 10 years); 279 (rash driving); 337 (causing minor injuries); 338 (causing major injuries); 427 (negligence)

failed to intimate him about the upcoming witnesses within reasonable time. "Till today they have not disclosed the names of witnesses. If they don't want to follow court orders then consequences must be followed," he said. "We cannot carry the files of all 63 witnesses every day. We are asking for the list as criminal jurisprudence is based on the principle of fair trial."

He added that the defence was making false accusations that the list of witnesses was not given. Meanwhile, two more witnesses were examined in court on Monday. The first witness was insurance agent Gurcharan Malhotra who denied making the insurance papers for the vehicle, and the second was Ameri D'Souza, a counter clerk with American Express Cleaners. D'Souza said he does not remember the contents of his police statement as the incident took place over a decade ago.

Syllabus not completed, MSC exams put off

Mumbai: Mumbai University has postponed the MSC (Part 1) semester exams from December 1 to December 11 and 15, following requests from students.

The exam will begin on December 11 for students with mathematics and December 15 for others. Students and senate members had said the syllabus was not taught as the mandatory academic session of 15 weeks could not be completed due to the Diwali vacations, election duty and delay of declaration of TYBS results.

Senate member Sanjay Vairal said they had received many complaints from students and teachers. Approximately 2,000 students will take the exam. The new timetable is expected to be released on Tuesday. TNN

L&T to set up 6K CCTVs in city

By '16, Live Footage Will Help Cops Zero In On Criminals In Minutes

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Mumbai: After three successive failures in selecting a firm to carry out the ambitious 24X7 CCTV surveillance project across the city, the state government on Monday selected L&T Infotech to set up over 6,000 electronic eyes at more than 1,500 junctions.

"After a scrutiny of bidders, we have found L&T's offer to build and operate the project technically and financially feasible. Though the cost has been pegged at Rs 950 crore, we have decided to negotiate further to bring down the burden on the state treasury," state home department sources said.

"The project will be executed in 21 months. We will soon have a meeting of all departments involved and the selected bidder to decide on the final strategy to avoid technical and financial glitches during project implementation," they added. The system with



HAWK EYE ON CRIME
Over 1,500 junctions to be monitored live

There will be over 110 screens in police stations and DCP offices

- The command centre of the entire surveillance will be located at the office of the police commissioner
- The zoom cameras will be able to catch objects moving at a speed from a distance
- The system can reserve the camera footage for 90 days
- The cost of the project is pegged at ₹950 crore but efforts on to reduce it further
- The project will be executed in 21 months
- Work on the project may start within a month's time if all goes according to plan

high-power cameras has the capacity to catch speeding objects from over a kilometre's distance and will help police chase criminals.

L&T and Trimax had submitted the bids. On Monday, technical scrutiny and financial evaluation of the bids were completed by the committees involving chief secretary Swadheen

Kshatriya, state IT department officials, and IIT-B professors.

The company that has offered competitive pricing and best technology has won the deal. "This is through a cash contract. We hope that issues such as pre-payment of cash raised by the companies that were short-listed earlier do not arise," the official added.