

short stories
RANE FIRING: HC ASKS FOR RECORDS

MUMBAI: The Bombay high court has directed the crime branch to submit a video recording of spot panchama and call records in the case where a complaint of attempt to murder has been lodged against industries minister Narayan Rane's son, Nitesh. Nitesh is accused of firing at Chintu Shaikh, a member of his outfit, Swabhimaan Sanghatana in September 2010.

IIT-B wants to use vibrohammer

MUMBAI: The Indian Institute of Technology (IIT) has informed the Bombay high court that it will have to use vibrohammer to conduct structural audit of Gautam Niwas, a building in Andheri, which allegedly developed cracks in February 2009 due to use of vibro hammer for the piling for the foundation of the elevated route of the Metro.

Man held for assaulting woman

NAVI MUMBAI: The Panvel Railway Police on Tuesday arrested Mohammed Qureshi, 21, for allegedly assaulting Yamini Kaur, 22, in a Panvel-Chhatrapati Shivaji Terminus train. The incident occurred at 11.30pm between Seawoods and Belapur railway stations. Finding Kaur alone in the ladies compartment, Qureshi tried to attack and loot her. Even as Kaur fought her attacker, Aadesh Kori, a 16-year-old minor helped her. Qureshi was remanded in police custody until February 7.

Mobile tower radiation fear grips Andheri colony

CONCERN Sher-e-Punjab Society has witnessed 15 cancer cases in past five years

Kunal Purohit
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MUMBAI: When Priya Aggarwal, 41, was detected with breast cancer in early 2007, she tried her best to make sure that it didn't distract her son, Rohan, who was preparing for his Class 10 exams. But the Andheri resident couldn't hide the affects of chemotherapy. One day Aggarwal came out of the bathroom, only to find a devastated Rohan staring at her nearly bald head. "He would keep saying 'Why my mother?', but nobody had an answer," said Aggarwal.

She isn't alone. In the past five years, more than 15 housewives living in Sher-e-Punjab colony in Andheri (East) have suffered from various forms of cancer. Although there is no proof of a direct link, residents are drawing parallels between the appearance of the first cancer case and the installation of the first mobile phone tower in the society nearly seven years ago.

According to Aggarwal, when she was first detected with cancer, her flat was right below a mobile tower. The family then rented another house in the colony. However, that too had a tower, thus forcing the family to move yet again.

The colony, housing more than 100 buildings, has a cluster of at least 8-10 towers spread atop three buildings. All these cancer victims reside within a 500-m radius of those towers.

Dr Parminder Bindra (name changed), a practising homeopath, was detected with ovarian cancer in June last year. "I've lived in this colony for more than

20 years. In the past, there had been only one case of cancer. The fact that all these cases happened only after these towers came up, and that too in a radius of 500m cannot be a coincidence," said Dr Bindra.

Sixty-two-year-old Gurinder Gill (name changed) was detected with breast cancer in October last year. "It has been a traumatic experience for me, shattering me completely," said Gill, who is now undergoing chemotherapy.

However, the victims know there isn't enough proof to prove a link between mobile tower radiation and cancer.

IIT professor Girish Kumar, who has been studying electromagnetic field radiations, has pored over the details and even taken radiation readings at Dr Bindra's house. "My question to the critics is how do you prove that these cases are not because of mobile tower radiation? Why have all the cases happened in the same colony? All these cases fall in the axis of the cell towers' radiation. Is that also a coincidence?" he asked.

Neha Kumar, who has been studying the biological effects of mobile phone towers, said, "All these women don't have any family history of cancer. Plus, all of them are within a certain radius of those mobile towers. All this is not a coincidence."

Dr Ranjeet Bajpai, radiation oncologist at Hinduja Hospital, admits there is a problem. "But, we need a sound mechanism which can establish a more direct cause-effect relationship. However, there are studies to show that cell tower radiation has led to different types of brain tumours," he said.



Mobile tower above the building in Sher-e-Punjab colony in Andheri (East)

PRASAD GORI / HT PHOTO

WHAT THEY SAID

It has been established that such radiation has definite ill-effects. I will contact the victims and seek more details.

DR RS SHARMA, deputy director general, ICMR

Waiting for a conclusive report on the subject wouldn't be a good idea. There are reports on the ill effects of such radiation.

RAM KUMAR, ex-advisor to the Department of Telecom

Medical body to study effects

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MUMBAI: Taking note of the rising number of complaints against the ill-effects of radiation emitted by cellular towers, the Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR) is contemplating a study on the city's radiation patterns.

Dr RS Sharma, deputy director general, ICMR, said that he would soon propose a city-specific study, to see the effects of such radiation on health.

Dr Sharma said Mumbai is at danger from mobile tower radiation, more so because of its demographics. "Compared

THE ICMR IS WORKING ON A STUDY ON THE RADIATION EMITTED BY MOBILE PHONES. HOWEVER, THAT WILL BE A DELHI-CENTRIC STUDY.

to New Delhi, Mumbai is a congested city and hence radiation affects a large number of people every day," he said.

Currently, the ICMR is working on a study on the radiation emitted by mobile phones. However, that will be a Delhi-centric study. It will be a five-year long study to gauge the long-

term effects of the radiation. The study, will, however, be reviewed every six months and findings, if any, will be made available.

"There are quite a few interesting aspects that the medical community has, to look forward to. Hopefully, concerns about dipping fertility due to mobile phone use will be taken up," said Dr Ranjeet Bajpai, radiation oncologist at Hinduja Hospital.

For years now, authorities in Mumbai have been grappling with the question of the dangers of mobile phone tower radiation. The state is yet to form its own rules on installing these towers on residential buildings.

BJP STATE EXECUTIVE TO HOLD MEET IN AURANGABAD

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AURANGABAD: In the run up to the municipal and district council polls to be held next year, the state executive of the Maharashtra Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) will converge in Aurangabad for a two-day brainstorming session from February 5.

The top brass of BJP including president Nitin Gadkari, senior BJP leader Gopinath Munde and Maharashtra convener Venkaiiah Naidu will come down to Aurangabad as the party strategises its revival in the state.

"There have been a slew of incidents from Adarsh scam to the rampant adulteration racket in the state that go unchecked. We will be discussing these issues and plan as to how we can effectively make the government answerable," BJP spokesperson Madhav Bhandari said.

The state BJP is presently squaring off against its arch rivals the Congress and the Nationalist Congress Party and has also crossed swords with its two decade-old ally Shiv Sena for space in Maharashtra's politics.

The party that emerged as the main opposition party in 2009 assembly elections is now getting more ambitious. With the BMC elections scheduled for 2012, the BJP is increasingly finding itself in conflict with Shiv Sena. Senior leaders from both the parties have been at loggerheads over various issues. Two senior leaders - Suresh Jain from Shiv Sena and Eknath Khadse from BJP - had a public showdown with each other too.

BJP's decision to choose Aurangabad as its destination for the meet stems from the desire to revive its Hindutva cadre. Aurangabad was recently in the news after the Shiv Sena-led municipal corporation passed a resolution demanding the renaming of the city to Sambhaji Nagar, after Shivaji's son Sambhaji.

Bar singer, husband held for blackmailing client

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NAVI MUMBAI: A 26-year-old bar singer, her husband and their accomplices were arrested for allegedly blackmailing and extorting cash and valuables from one of her clients.

Disha and her husband Syed Rauf Ismail, 22, had lured Pradip Patil, 40, the APMC police said.

The accused were arrested from Howrah railway station at Kolkata and brought to Navli Mumbai on Tuesday.

Disha worked at bars in Mira Road and Thane where Patil came in contact with her. They

exchanged numbers and kept in touch with each other, the police said.

Suresh Pawar, assistant police inspector said: "On January 25, Disha called Patil and they met at Kalash lodge at Vashi.

After sometime Disha excused herself telling him

that she would return in five minutes."

"Soon after she left, three men, including her husband, entered the room and accused Patil of attempting to rape Disha. They allegedly robbed him of his gold chain and cash worth Rs1.86 lakh and fled," Pawar added.

A team of officers was sent to Kolkata where Disha, Ismail and their accomplices Baraudin Topiwala, 18, and Sajid Shaikh alias Sufi, 18, were arrested.

The police have recovered cash and valuables worth Rs1.74 lakh. The police are trying to find out if the accused had committed similar offence before.

MNS trains locals for railway recruitment examinations

Naresh Kamath
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MUMBAI: After staging several violent demonstrations against the alleged injustice of neglecting locals in railway jobs, the Raj Thackeray-led Maharashtra Navnirman Sena (MNS) on Wednesday launched a campaign to train youths appearing for the recruitment process scheduled this month.

The programme would include detailed information on filling of forms, various eligibility criteria to be fulfilled, and guidance by the railway staff as well as creating awareness of the recruitment process by way of hoardings across the state. The MNS has also published a detailed handbook on the process, which would be distributed through party offices and stalls outside the theatres, bus stands and railway stations.

Addressing a party programme at Prabhadevi, Thackeray appealed to Maharashtra youths to apply for jobs in the railways. "You should apply in such large numbers that they should not dare to reject your applications," he said.

Thackeray claimed that for years Maharashtra has been "deliberately kept away" from railway jobs to facilitate jobs for youths from Uttar

IN THE PAST



IN 2003, Raj Thackeray loyalists had allegedly ransacked the office of the central recruitment board and assaulted candidates coming from Bihar at Kalyan to appear for the exams.



IN 2008, MNS activists had attacked 17 examination centres in suburban areas and drove away north Indian candidates who had come to give their exams.

You should apply in such large numbers that they should not dare to reject your applications.

RAJ THACKERAY
MNS Chief

Pradesh and Bihar. This recruitment is significant as for the first time candidates would be allowed to give the exams in their regional languages. More than 10,000 jobs including those of porters, sweepers

and trackmen have been opened up for recruitment. Political analysts called this campaign a step towards expanding the party's political base.

"Raj wants to send a message to the Maharashtra that he is their wellwisher and jobs are the best medium to convey it," said Nilu Damle, a political commentator.

Damle said the Sthaniya Lokadhikar Samitee, an employment wing of the Shiv Sena, had recruited large number of Maharashtra to hotels, airports and banks, a factor responsible for the growth of the party.

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Cops held for robbing rationing officer

HT Correspondent
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MUMBAI: A serving and a discharged police constable, along with two others, were arrested on the charges of robbery on Wednesday.

Constable Balasaheb Ratan Kamble, 46, of the Local Arms division, Salim Hamid Shaikh, 42, who was discharged from the force three years ago, one Rajnikant Arjun Shinde, 59, and his 32-year-old son Rahul were arrested from the Shivaji Nagar area.

Sub-inspector Vijay Jadhav said, "The four had been threatening a rationing officer from Shivaji Nagar over

THEY DEMANDED MONEY FROM THE COMPLAINANT. WHEN HE REFUSED, THEY SNATCHED RS 50,000 FROM HIS SHOP

the past few weeks. On Tuesday, they came to the complainant's shop and threatened him to pay up. When he refused, they snatched Rs50,000 from his shop and fled." Jadhav added, "We are interrogating them to find out why they committed the crime."

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HC tells police to probe, make arrests in Khar society case

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MUMBAI: Lawyers for residents of Ganeshkripa society in Khar said, on Wednesday, that the high court had ordered the police to investigate and take action against those accused of forging documents for the slum rehabilitation project.

"A division bench of justice AM Khanwilkar and AR Joshi ordered the investigating officer senior police inspector Prashant Bagade to investigate the case, including the arrest of the 11 accused committee members and four members of construction company Shivalik Ventures, and record the residents' statements within 15 days," said lawyers from the Human Rights Law Network.

Residents had lodged a First Information Report at Nirmal Nagar police station in



One of the structures at the Ganeshkripa society, Khar, that was demolished last month.

September 2010 against the society committee members and builders alleging that they had forged signatures on the consent letter in order to implement a slum rehabilitation scheme.

When asked, Bagade said he had not received any order from the court.

Prakash Azgaonkar of Shivalik Ventures said, "We came into the picture only two years

ago. We are not to be blamed."

Although the high court asked for an investigation, there is no relief to residents against demolition. "Demolition will continue till all structures are demolished as per the order," said P Rokde, deputy collector.

Fourteen houses were demolished on Wednesday. But, instead of loud protests, seven residents of the society went on a hunger strike.