

Jewellery polisher hopes to shine at ultramarathon

Pics: Rizwan Mithawala

He Plans To Run 100Km On Independence Day

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

Mumbai: A pair of worn-out running shoes aren't quite the sort of equipment you would expect to find lying by the window sill of a jewellery-polishing unit in central Mumbai.

The shoes in question belong to 30-year-old jewellery polisher Abbas Shaikh, who spends 12 hours each day putting the sheen on bits of jewellery, and the rest of his time training for marathons. On Independence Day, Shaikh is set to test his limits at Mumbai's first ultramarathon.

He hopes to run 100km during the 12-hour race organized by the Shivaji Park Marathon Club, which will see runners doing 12-km loops between Shivaji Park and Worli from 5am to 5pm. That Shaikh won first prize at the Bangalore half-marathon last December, completing a distance of 75km in 7.23 hours may well have emboldened him to attempt 100 km. He currently shares space each night with dozens of workers at the cramped jewellery unit where he once worked. While his workshop is in central Mumbai, he prefers to spend the night at his former employer's unit in Kalbadevi, as it is closer to Marine Drive where he goes running in the wee hours of the morning. On days when he



REAL SPARKLER

- ▶ Abbas Shaikh (30), who polishes jewellery for a living, trains for marathons when he gets time off from his 12-hour shift
- ▶ He eats what all other workers eat: rice, daal and sabzi
- ▶ He usually runs for an hour on all days and around three hours on Sunday. At times, he runs for four or five hours



runs for four or five hours, he barely catches a couple of hours sleep.

It's near impossible to imagine that running was something Shaikh had never attempted until four years ago. "I was walking along Marine Drive at night with a friend when we saw people running by the sea. We laughed as it looked like such a funny thing to

do. Then we tried running too," says Shaikh, who gradually began running 20km without knowing the distances he ran. He would first run up and down Marine Drive. He once ran behind a couple of runners belonging to international marathoner Savio D'Souza's running group to see where they were headed. He was invited to join

them. Over time, the runner's group became a family of sorts for Shaikh, the young man from an impoverished village in West Bengal, alone in Mumbai.

He had left his village at the age of 14 to work as a jewellery polisher in Gujarat and later moved to Mumbai, a city where he knew no one. Today, he says his running

group provides him with more support than his family ever could, and he has bought him running gear and paid for his tickets to various cities where he runs marathons. D'Souza, who helped train Shaikh, says the young man is now like his assistant, and even conducts running classes when D'Souza is on a break.

'DIG's voice sample key to breakthrough in rape case'

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Mumbai: Investigators have pinned their hopes on deputy inspector general Sunil Paraskar's voice sample to crack the rape case. A model has alleged that the senior police officer sexually assaulted her.

On Saturday, the police recorded Paraskar's statement and said that they would seek a layered-voice analysis. He has secured interim bail in the rape case. "We are taking all efforts to build a watertight case. However, Paraskar (57) wants to know about the test before he undergoes it," said a police offi-

SPEECH TEST

▶ Layered-voice analysis functions on variations in a voice

▶ A suspect's speech sample can be recorded using a microphone for analysis or an earlier voice recording can be used

▶ The test is not admissible as evidence in court but it can help cops get vital clues

▶ DIG Sunil Paraskar has not given written consent to the test

cer Paraskar has refused to undergo a lie-detector test in the case, even as the complainant has indicated her consent for the same. The police have conducted panchanama at various places like a bungalow in Madh Island and a flat in Navi Mumbai where the alleged incidents took place. The police have so far recorded Paraskar's statements on many occasions but are insisting on his custodial interrogation. "We are trying our best to oppose his bail plea. This is a sensitive case where a senior law-enforcement officer has been accused of rape. The probe is being done in a transparent manner," said an official. In her FIR, the model had claimed she first met Paraskar in April 2013, when he was the additional commissioner (north region).

'Splurging public funds on roads without proper checks is a waste'

Citizens Doubt 4,500Cr Plan For Suburbs

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Mumbai: The BMC is planning a major road revamp in the western suburbs over the next three years at a cost of Rs 4,500 crore, but citizens are sceptical if the amount will be properly utilized.

TIMES VIEW: Spending so much money from the public exchequer would not have seemed so offensive had our experience not been so bitter. Every big plan revolving around roads - with huge infusions of cash - has ended in potholed roads during monsoon. The battered state of Mumbai's road surface for more than four months every year is cynicism about the BMC's plans.

Civic officials said the BMC will issue 16 tenders for Rs 4,500 crore, an amount which will be staggered over three years. It will be limited to Rs 500 crore this year; next year the project will require Rs 2,000 crore, the remaining amount will be for work done the following year. "Work has been divided into

CIVIC BODY'S GRAND ROAD MAP

▶ The BMC has prepared a master plan to repair and reconstruct roads in the western suburbs over the next three years

▶ The civic body plans to issue tenders worth ₹4,500 crore for nearly 150 roads

▶ Civic officials said the entire amount will be staggered over three years. It will be limited to ₹500 crore in the first year, next year the project will require ₹2,000 crore while the

remaining amount will be for work done in the following year

▶ The work will be carried out in two phases, excluding the monsoons, and is likely to continue well into 2017

▶ The BMC will invite a total of 16 tenders, four each for asphalt roads, cement concrete roads, improvement of side-strips and for major repairs of the Link Road and SV Road



CITY'S POTHOLE WOES IN 2014

Total Complaints Received Since June	Complaints Attended To	BMC's Budget For Filling Potholes
5,941	5,094	₹ 28cr

parts so we can give contracts to a lot of people to facilitate competition," an official said.

However, activists say budget has never been an issue with the BMC, what really ails Mumbai's roads is the lack of quality supervision. "Huge money is spent every year on roads, but they give way every

monsoon due to the poor quality of work. Contractors may cut corners, but it's the responsibility of BMC engineers to ensure quality, which is not happening," a retired official from the road department said.

Samajwadi Party corporator Rais Shaikh said the BMC spends a huge sum on roads

each year, but has little to show for it. "Road tenders are given to benefit contractors. Asphalt roads are made so poorly, surfaces are washed away with the first showers. Eligibility criteria for the tenders enables only a select few to bid," he said.

Vinit Shah, a resident of Kandivli, said, "Every year the

BMC repairs roads, but they develop potholes again. The entire Rs 4,500 crore will again be pocketed by contractors."

Additional municipal commissioner S V R Srinivas said, "The administrative process to allot tenders has been initiated early so that work can start by the end of the year."

Pay ₹1.9L for car accident, insurer told

Claim Rejected Over Non-Renewal Of Driving Licence

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Mumbai: The state consumer commission on Wednesday ruled in favour of a complainant after an insurance company rejected his car accident claim on the ground that he had not renewed his driving licence at the time of the accident. The state commission cited an earlier National Consumer Disputes Redressal Commission order in another case in which it had said,

"There was no nexus between the absence of licence and accident and therefore the insured was entitled to receive the insurance amount of claim on non-standard basis."

Reliance General Insurance Co will have to pay the complainant, Mumbai-based Shirish Natu, Rs 1.9 lakh in lieu of the damage caused to his car.

Natu filed the complaint before the Maharashtra State Consumer Disputes Redressal Commission in 2011 after a district forum dismissed his complaint on April 30, 2011. He had procured the insurance claim for his car and it was valid from

January 22, 2008, to January 21, 2009. On July 3, 2008, the car met with an accident, injuring him and also causing damage to the vehicle.

The district forum, while dismissing the complaint, had held that Natu had not renewed the license after March 3, 1999, and therefore on the date of the accident, the complainant did not have an effective and valid driving licence.

While the cost of the total damage to the vehicle worked out to around Rs 2.6 lakh, it was insured for Rs 1.9 lakh. Natu sought reimbursement of this amount, which the insurance company rejected,

forcing him to file the complaint.

The insurance company gave its reply and said that Natu was not entitled to any compensation since the driver did not hold a valid driving licence. The company said this was a breach of the policy's terms and conditions.

The commission, though, pointed out the fact was not that the insured was debarred from holding a driving licence or was not qualified to hold such a licence. "Therefore, in view of the judgments of the National Commission, we find that the appellant should have been ordered to be compensated on non-standard basis," the commission said.

BMC to decide on water cut next week

Mumbai: With the stock at lakes supplying water to the city improving, the BMC will take a call next week whether to roll back the cuts in supply or not.

Owing to scanty rain earlier, the BMC has imposed 10% water cuts on residential users and 50% the commercial and industrial users. "We are in a comfortable position now. So we are considering rolling back the cut at least on residential users," said a civic official.

The total stock in all the lakes is now 12,15,043 lakh million litres. **TNN**

Missive to CM to help gritty disabled 19-year-old

Boy From Palghar Scored 53% In SSC

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Navi Mumbai: A social worker from Navi Mumbai, Bharat Samant, has written to the chief minister seeking medical assistance to help a differently-abled teenager, who recently cleared the SSC board exams with 53% marks.

Born with underdeveloped arms and one leg, Vasant Ravate (19) has become a marvel of sorts in Bhendipada village in Palghar district as he hops to S T Kadam Junior College on his right leg, where he is study-

ing arts. "I have requested chief minister Prithviraj Chavan to see if hi-tech prosthetic arms can be given to Vasant like the ones that were given to the Ghatkopar railway mishap victim, Monika More. I feel overwhelmed and humbled to see

AGAINST ALL ODDS

the grit and determination in Vasant who cleared SSC exams with 53% marks," said Samant. "I am comfortable writing with my right foot. Fortunately, my college lectures are held on the ground floor where I sit on a



Vasant Ravate was born with underdeveloped arms and one leg

long bench to take down notes. I've made new friends too," said Vasant, with a smile. "After college, I plan to take up a government job and hope to

work in the new Palghar district collectorate some day." While Vasant's father, Suresh, stopped farming on the small piece of land he owns

to take care of his son 24x7, his mother, Sumati, is the sole breadwinner of the family. She works as a maid and earns Rs 3,000 a month.

Vasant's younger sister Chandrakala, who dropped out of school after class IX in rural Palghar, said, "Bhau (brother) is mentally very strong and determined. He hops across the village fields to reach the main road from where he gets into an autorickshaw to go to college. The entire village is very proud of him."

"I am happy that Palghar is now a new state district with its own collectorate building. Now, we won't have to go all the way to Thane for any official

work," said Vasant.

His proud father, Suresh, said, "Both my wife and I are completely 'angootha chhap' (illiterate). All through his school years, I used to accompany him to school and back. Now, he prefers going to college alone. He has become a man now."

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Another theft on Rajdhani, again after Kota

Passengers Want Better Security, Complaint System

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Mumbai: For the third consecutive day, passengers on the Mumbai-New Delhi Rajdhani Express found their valuables missing early in the morning, raising serious questions about security in what is believed to be the country's premier train.

As in previous incidents, the victims of Saturday's thefts were also women. Nidhi Agarwal, a Navi Mumbai resident, was travelling with her four-year-old son while Vikhroli resident Raj Bathiyani, a senior citizen, was with her husband, in coach A-4. Both realized their purses were missing at around 4am, after the train left Kota.

Nidhi's brother Manish Agarwal, said, "When my sister

TIMES VIEW: A one-off theft on a train is one thing. But repeated incidents on the same route and on the same stretch show the impunity with which now robbers operate on the country's best-known, most "prestigious" train and reflect poorly on the railway's ability to safeguard passengers and their belongings. It definitely looks like the working of a well-oiled machinery that is much more competent than the law keepers.

woke up at around 4am, her purse, which had Rs 6,000 in cash, a tablet, a phone and bangles worth Rs 40,000, was missing." Nidhi borrowed a phone to inform her brother about the theft. Around the same time, the Bathiyanis realised they were robbed. Ramlal Bathiyani said, "My wife went to the washroom at around 4am. When she returned, her purse was missing."

Railway officials suspect there is a gang operating between Kota and Nagda stations, as all incidents were noticed after the train crossed Kota. "There was no help from the train staff. We went to other coaches and the pantry car on our own to look for the purse,"

PREMIER TRAIN TARGETED THRICE



THE INCIDENT | Two women realised their bags were stolen on the Mumbai-Delhi Rajdhani Express at around 4am, soon after the train left Kota station

VICTIMS | Nidhi Agarwal, a Navi Mumbai resident, lost her bag containing ₹6,000 in cash, a tablet, mobile, bangles worth ₹40,000, credit and debit cards Vikhroli resident Raj Bathiyani lost her purse with ₹25,000 in cash, two watches and a mobile worth ₹25,000

COMPLAINT | It took them an hour to file a complaint with police at New Delhi station and by the time the cops searched the train, it was almost empty

PREVIOUS THEFTS

AUGUST 7 | Pilot Satya Rajmohan and homemaker Neeta Bokaria found their purses missing on the Delhi-Mumbai Rajdhani

AUGUST 8 | Priti Sood, wife of a CR official, and Deepika Chaddha, an advocate, realised their purses were missing, on the Mumbai-Delhi Rajdhani

HELPLINES
RPF (CR) | 1275/022-22610194
RPF (WR) | 1322/9833331111

Nidhi said. She said after she raised an alarm, some passengers used an app which indicated her phone was still inside the train. "The train does not halt between Kota and New Delhi. A proper search could have helped nab the accused," she said. "The complaint registration mechanism has to be improved. The RPF at New Delhi station sent us to the Delhi police. Our complaint was registered after an hour and by the time cops entered the coach, the train was almost empty," Manish said.

All-time high: Assembly polls to cost ₹421cr

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Mumbai: This assembly election would be the costliest ever. Poll expenses, funded by the public exchequer, are expected to be around Rs 420.9 crore this year—considerably higher than Rs 260.3 crore in 2009. The 2004 assembly polls had cost the state around Rs 180 crore, say Election Commission officials.

Much of the increased expenses will go into ensuring maximum registration of voters and voter turnout, managing poll staff and infrastructure, booths and security and, lastly, creating awareness about ethical voting. For this, festivals such as Ganeshotsav and Navratri will be used as a social platform in a large way.

"We will use the festivals as a platform to create awareness. Campaign meetings, rangoli competitions, street plays, human chains, debates, youth festivals, sports and quizzes as awareness platforms

"The commission wants people to think twice before casting their vote to elect a strong government. The commission's campaign will be aimed at youngsters and women. Our experience shows they do not come out to vote as per expectations," said another official.

Records of the previous four elections reveal fewer youngsters and women voted than their numbers on the census and voters' roll. Their numbers were less than those voters who had crossed 40 years of age.

Stranger enters house, abuses teen

Mumbai: A 13-year-old girl has alleged that she was sexually assaulted on Saturday by an unknown man after he walked into her house, saying her father had sent him to take her measurements for a uniform as she was going to get a job in the police. The incident took place when the survivor was alone at home,

said the Tilak Nagar police. In the complaint, the survivor said, "After entering the house, the man initially took measurement of my clothes and asked me to remove it to check if there was any injury or surgery mark. He then sexually assaulted me." The survivor has been sent for medical check-up. **TNN**