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Calendar

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**LUDHIANA STORIES**

TOP STORIES

LUDHIANA INDEX

Wife was shot before being set afire Charred body was found on Oct 26; husband on the run

**Mohit Khanna
Tribune News Service**

Ludhiana, October 31

She was shot in the head before being set afire. After four days of search, the police has managed to solve a murder case. The victim, identified as Dimple (34), a resident of Noorwala road, was suspected to be killed by her husband. Panic gripped the Kirti Nagar area after her charred remains were found on October 26. Except for a partially burnt hand, ACP Bhupinder Singh and SHO Division No 7 Jaswinder Singh had no clue to move ahead in the probe.

The police was depending on information from its sources. It received vital clues yesterday when the autopsy report of the skull stated that the woman was shot. Simultaneously, the police got another crucial lead that a woman from Noorwala road had been missing since October 25.

Following a tip-off, the police rushed to the house of the victim and neighbours identified the woman from the clothes she was wearing on the day of the murder. The neighbours told the police that the couple had strained relations and quarrelled often.

It is learnt that Dimple's husband has been on the run after the incident. Sources said search parties had been sent to nab him.

The sources suspected that the accused shot her first and then set her afire to eliminate evidence. It is learnt

that she was his second wife.

The house was locked and family members were not available for comments. The neighbours refused to divulge any details about the children of the victim.

No luck with weapon & bullet

The police has yet to recover the weapon used in the crime or even the bullet that pierced the skull of the victim. The police is trying to find out whether a country-made weapon was used to kill her.

Short of staff, fire dept braces for Diwali **Shivani Bhakoo/TNS**

Ludhiana, October 31

Instead of being prepared to fight any exigency on Diwali, employees of the municipal corporation's fire department appear to be leaving it to luck to help them out on the festival. Since the department is hamstrung by a staff crunch and poor infrastructure, the employees cannot help but keep their fingers crossed.

They know they would not be able to do much in case major fires break out in the city on Diwali. Their worries are mounting with each passing day with the shortage of firemen, drivers and firefighting equipment staring in their faces. With only 11 drivers for fire engines to cater to a city of 4 million, firemen will be hard pressed to meet any incident.

"We'll be put on 'high alert' duty on Diwali. We'll do our best but where's the infrastructure? Then there is the paucity of employees. Despite repeated requests to the state government we haven't being given more staff", said a fireman requesting anonymity.

Not only drivers of fire engines, there is an acute shortage of firemen in the department with about 40 needed immediately in the department. Presently, department is working with just three leading firemen and 42 firemen. Every firefighter is on 12-hour duty without any holiday, due to which the staff has been under pressure for the past two years and is on the

verge of “burning out”.

Firefighting vehicles number about 33 of which many are as old as ten years. The civic body gets them repaired regularly to ensure there is no shortage of vehicles. According to experts, the life of a fire engine is only ten years and the fire department is still working with 1980s models. Only ten new models have been inducted into the fleet since 2002.

The MC had conducted interviews for appointing firemen on a contractual basis about three months ago. Even though appointment letters were going to be issued to those selected, the process was halted abruptly by mayor Hakam Singh Gyaspura for reasons best known to him. Fresh interviews were then announced but perhaps certain civic functionaries do not considering the much needed recruitment a priority.

Fire stations are also in a pathetic condition. At the Gill Chowk fire station though several foam cylinders are kept to douse a fire the foam in many of them has been converted into water, which keeps on leaking. "No one is bothered nor is there is any check by officials. Foam in cylinders comes into contact with air and gets converted into water, which now leaks continuously", said an employee at Gill Chowk Fire Station. "Going by the previous record on Diwali, about 40-45 fire incidents are reported each year. We have no family-life. No safety equipment has been given to the staff", said a fireman.

Factfile

- Only 11 drivers for 33 firefighting vehicles
- Dept manages with just 3 leading firemen
- No 54-metre ladders to control fire in a multistoried building
- About 40 more firemen are needed immediately

No hydraulic ladder

Should a multistoreyed building catches fire, the fire department does not have a 54 meter ladder to douse the flames. Aluminum ladders are being used in all fire incidents in the city. Most fires are reported from the city interiors making it difficult for fire fighting vehicles

to gain access through the congested access roads.

GAMBLING FEVER
Stakes, here, run into lakhs
Kuldip Bhatia

Ludhiana, October 31

Gambling stakes in the city range from a few hundred to a couple of lakhs during each session. Gambling begins around Dasehra and continues till Diwali night, or at times, even beyond that with several crores of rupees changing hands during these weeks.

There are hordes of players who gamble for a fortnight before Diwali, but for the "regulars" in card rooms of clubs in the mega city, stakes go bigger as Diwali approaches.

The most popular game for gamblers during Diwali season is flush where stakes are huge while small players continue with rummy at a few hundred rupees per point, and each game yielding a couple of thousands to the winner.

"But it is flush, with sessions at farmhouses, resorts, hotels and plush drawing rooms, where the stakes go to unimaginable proportions," confides an old-timer, claiming that wins or losses run into a couple of lakhs in each session which lasts from five to eight hours.

Earlier, leading industrialists and businessmen would gamble in a big way. But with realtors having made a lot of money during the boom in the real estate sector making an entry, the gambling scene has changed.

"Normally, the pot (money which each player has to put in at the beginning) is a few hundred or at the most a few thousand rupees. But at high-stake games, it can go from Rs 50,000 to a few lakhs, with the winner getting a booty of upward of Rs 25 lakh," sources claimed.

"A few days ago, a young member of an influential family lost nearly Rs 10 lakh in one session at a club," says an industrialist, who is a regular at the card room.

Another claimed that recently, a businessman lost over

Rs 1 crore in a session that lasted till wee hours of the next morning.

The big question is: Do the players with very high stakes carry huge amount of cash to settle the losses on the spot? The answer is no.

"All players are known to one another and with a very few or rare exceptions, all gambling losses are settled in a few days' time. For those who default, it is over as they become 'outcasts' at gambling tables," a card player remarked.

Youth arrested for raping 15-year-old **Tribune News Service**

Ludhiana, October 31

A youth has been arrested for raping a 15- year-old girl in a hotel room. The accused, identified as Honey, a resident of Salem Tabri, had even threatened to circulate her MMS if she dared to reveal his identity.

According to police sources, this incident took place nearly 10 days ago when Honey took the girl to a hotel room on the pretext of handing over a surprise gift to her. The girl claimed that the accused had raped her in the hotel room located near the Clock Tower.

After remaining low for a few days, the girl narrated the entire incident to her parents. It is alleged that the parents of both boy and the girl were aware of their relationship.

The boy had expressed his desire to marry the girl. But, the boy's parents, fearing legal hurdles, refused to get him married to the girl.

This incident came to light after the boy's family tired to affect a compromise and even offered ransom to the victim's family.

The matter was brought to the notice of the Commissioner of Police, who got a case registered in this regard.

Honey was booked under Section 376 of the IPC for

rape whereas some of his accomplices were booked for threatening the girl.

Girl who cried rape booked for extortion

Mohit Khanna/Tribune News Service

Ludhiana, October 31

He was branded as a rapist and languished in jail for over 189 days, undergoing severe mental trauma. For nearly four years he suffered legal onslaughts hoping one day he would come out with his record clean. His family members faced social ostracism for a crime their child claimed he had never committed.

Rishi Sood, 31, is a happy man today as the "swindler" girl who ruined his life has been booked by the police for fraud, extortion and filing false rape charges against him.

However, booking the suspect, Suman Paul aka Neha aka Parul Gupta, a resident of Nehru Colony in Modi Nagar district near Gaziabad, Uttar Pradesh, was not a cakewalk for the city police. Despite knowing she has brought false rape charges against Sood many top cops, including SSPs, to dissuade them to file a case against her. That too when three superintendents of police, including two IPS officers, gave a "clean chit" to Sood during the probe conducted by a special investigation team set up by the Ludhiana DIG.

The team, led by Khanna SSP Gautam Cheema, maintained the girl had lodged a complaint against Sood with the intention to blackmail him in order to extort money and recommended cancellation of the FIR. The police also began proceedings under section 182 of the IPC against her for giving false statements to the police. Finally police commissioner Ishwar Singh stepped in and constituted another team, led by ADCP III JS Sidhu, which found Sood to be innocent. Suman was then booked for fraud and extortion.

The incident has again exposed how many women use loopholes in the law to harass innocent youths by falsely accusing them of rape.

Sood, who still shivers while narrating his ordeal, said

he met the girl at an exhibition of medical equipment organised in New Delhi in September 2006, where she introduced herself as "Dr Neha". He said they met at various places following which she "lured" him into marrying her, adding he even planned to visit Delhi to meet the girl's parents.

"All was going smoothly, until one day Suman demanded Rs 1.5 lakh. I later got to know she had to pay a bill of Rs 1.5 lakh that she owed a local hotel as she was staying there for a long period. When I refused to pay the bill she got a case filed against me," Sood stated.

In the meantime Sood came to know Suman and an accomplice of hers had tried to implicate six other youths coming from "high status" families and working in the medical healthcare industry by sending them SMSes and calling up from different phone numbers. "Somehow we all exchanged notes and managed to escape from the clutches of the gang," he said. Little did Sood know he had landed in the net of an organised racket of "swindler girls" who extorted money from innocent young men by falsely accusing them of rape.

The gang was enjoying support from noted gangster Raman Rana, who is on the run after he killed his bitter rival Lalla. It is learnt that he is operating the gang from outside the country. Rishi's father alleged a gang of swindlers had implicated his son in a false rape case and had demanded Rs 22 lakh from him for withdrawing the complaint.

"I refused to pay the extortion amount and spent 189 days in jail for a rape case," said Rishi and further added, "But my misery did not end here soon after freeing from jail another girl, member of the same gang, stated making frantic call at my number."

"Only I know how I faced this humiliation for the past four years. I wanted to prove I was falsely implicated. I thank my family members and friends who stood by me in thick and thin," said Sood. Meanwhile, Suman was not available for comments.

Suman's crime graph

Besides being booked by the police for falsely implicating an innocent youth in a rape case, Suman Paul was also booked for conning a Delhi based woman, Seema Sehgal, and for committing a theft at a house in Haibowal. She is believed to have "strong links" with gangsters, hoteliers, travel agents and self-styled social activists who allegedly lured affluent youths by frequently changing their identities and phone numbers and later implicating them with false rape charges. Her father has reportedly disowned her.

<https://www.tribuneindia.com/2010/20101101/ldh1.htm>