

Two-way mess at incomplete underpass on VIP Airport Road

Fatalities On The Rise As Vehicles Drive On Wrong Side

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Pune: Haste by civic authorities in opening one-way traffic on the Kalyaninagar-VIP Airport Road through Ramwadi underpass has resulted in an increase in fatalities on the stretch, with vehicles using the half-complete route for two-way movement.

Over-speeding and lack of safe pedestrian crossings further make it a dangerous spot for those on foot, alleges citizen group Vimannagar Citizens Forum, which has demanded accountability from the Pune Municipal Corporation (PMC) and the traffic police regarding completion of the underpass.

Ten fatal accidents were reported from VIP Airport Road and Ramwadi underpass areas in the first two months of 2015, as against a total 26 in the whole of the previous year. As many as 11 non-fatal accidents



While vehicles brazenly drive on the wrong side, the absence of basic amenities too add to the issues on this stretch



TIMES VIEW

Driving on the Kalyaninagar-VIP Airport Road through Ramwadi underpass has become a nightmare. Ten citizens have already lost their lives this year in accidents on the stretch and yet civic officials and the traffic police have failed to take corrective measures. The civic body has already missed the deadline for fully commissioning the road because of land acquisition hassles and encroachments. Moreover, its move to partially open the road without pedestrian crossings, adequate street lights, proper road dividers and speed breakers has made this one way unsafe. The PMC should ensure that safety infrastructure work is carried out on a war footing. The traffic police, too, must step up vigil to curb over-speeding and driving on the wrong side.

have also been reported from the same stretch in January and February this year, a sharp contrast to 2014 which had a total of 28 non-fatal accidents, reveals an application filed on the matter by Qaneez Sukhrani, convener of the citizen forum, under the provisions of the Right to Information Act.

The sharp rise, Sukhrani alleges, is on account of vehicles entering the one-way stretch of the underpass from the wrong side, a problem compounded by poor street lighting and absence of speed-breakers and pedestrian crossings on the VIP Airport Road. Besides, according to Sukhrani, none of the first information reports (FIR) filed with the police after the accidents mention the reason or types of vehicle involved or even the exact spot where accident occurred.

The activist, who has been pursuing the matter since October 2014, says the problems have been created by the PMC which was in a hurry to open the underpass, even though only one side of the road had been made. "This project, which comes under the Jawaharlar Nehru National Urban Renewal Mission, was supposed to be completed in May 2013. In reality, the civic body is yet to even acquire the land on which the

THE PROBLEMS

▶ Vehicles from VIP Airport Road enter the underpass towards Kalyaninagar despite it being 'NO ENTRY'

▶ Poor illumination around the Ramwadi crossing makes it highly accident prone

▶ Absence of speed breakers and pedestrian crossings mean vehicles, especially taxis, frequently over-speed

▶ Land acquisition for the other side of the vehicular underpass is still incomplete

▶ Inconsistent road width at both sides at Ramwadi near Hyatt hotel

▶ Free left from Pune to VIP Airport Road has not been created by the PMC, ostensibly under pressure from the Siddharthnagar slums

▶ Divider blocks on VIP Airport Road are loose and not secured, allowing vehicles wanting to proceed in the wrong direction to wiggle through

▶ Divider blocks are too low (not consistent with rest of divider on VIP Airport Road), and not visible at night



other side of the underpass is to be constructed. Portions of it are illegally occupied by the Siddharthnagar slumdwellers, while a part of it is under litigation. Their records online are misleading too — at places the official reports are claiming that the project is complete, at others, they say it is under construction. The local body is cheating the state and Union governments," Sukhrani says.

Explaining the problem, she says, "The municipal corporation has not created a free left from Ahmednagar road to VIP Airport Road, ostensibly under pressure from the Siddharthnagar slum. Even drivers don't want to drive a few metres

for a U-turn and come down the wrong side. From Kalyaninagar, the underpass is two-way and has a divider, but suddenly narrows into a one-way road."

In a recent letter to the traffic police, the activist has called for immediate intervention to prevent any more loss of lives. "Even if you have opened up the access in October 2014 under pressure from PMC, your first obligation is to ensure that traffic movement should not put people's lives at risk," the letter says.

PMC shuns all responsibilities. Namdev Barapatre, superintendent of engineering

(roads) in the civic body, says, "It is not in the PMC's hands to stop people from driving on the wrong side of the road. We have even put up signboards to inform people that it's a one way. The area's traffic police must

depute a constable who can guide drivers on the right way."

Srinivas Bonala, additional city engineer (project) traffic planning (JNNURM), too blames poor traffic sense. "We have opened the one way road to ease the drive for people coming from Kalyaninagar. This does not mean vehicles from the other side can enter from

the wrong side. We are stuck because of the stay on the land acquisition. We request police to educate drivers through awareness drives," he says.

The traffic police claims that necessary steps are being taken. H T Kumbhar, police inspector (traffic), Yerawada, says, "We are issuing challans to defaulters. We have increased the divider on Kalyaninagar side and have also put up sign boards in three languages about the direction of traffic. People try to take advantage of the few hours in the afternoon when police personnel are not posted. Very soon, we will post constables round the clock on both ends of the underpass."

ACCIDENTS INCREASE

ROAD	VIP AIRPORT ROAD	RAMWADI UNDERPASS
NON FATAL		
▶ 2014	11	17
▶ 2015 (JAN & FEB)	7	4
FATAL		
▶ 2014	9	17
▶ 2015 (JAN & FEB)	5	5

PEDESTRIAN ACCIDENTS AT VIP AIRPORT ROAD

NON FATAL	FATAL
▶ 2014 3	▶ 2014 1
▶ 2015* 2	▶ 2015 1

*2015 FIGURES ARE TILL JAN, FEB & MAR

"I use the stretch everyday in an autorickshaw. It's a very narrow road and on top of that drivers, especially two-wheelers, regularly come down the wrong side of the road, holding up traffic for several minutes. There have been many instances when an accident was about to happen on the road, even in peak hours when I travel

Yukti Mehra | STUDENT

"We have been waiting since the last many years for the project to be completed. The underpass is dangerous for use from both sides. Those coming from Kalyaninagar side take a sharp turn at the start of the underpass as there is a break in the divider there. Those approaching from the airport side enter the narrow road from the wrong side

Arun Bharadwaj | RESIDENT OF VIP AIRPORT ROAD

SOURCE: TRAFFIC POLICE DATA REVEALED THROUGH APPLICATION UNDER RIGHT TO INFORMATION

Smart cities plan: Funds a likely challenge for PMC

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

Pune: The Pune Municipal Corporation (PMC) will have to prove its financial worth if the city is selected as one of the participants in the smart cities programme.

In an official statement, the Union urban development department has said that cities that will be part of the programme will be required to match the Centre's contribution for the development of city and mobilize additional resources required from various sources including the private-public partnership (PPP) model. Accordingly, the Centre, states and urban local bodies will spend about 1 lakh crore on development of smart cities over the next five years.

The mission to build 100 smart cities was approved by the Union cabinet on April 29, 2015. Under this mission, the central government will spend Rs 48,000cr over the next five years to provide an assistance of Rs100cr to each city selected under the programme every year.

Mayor Dattatraya Dhanawde has written to the Centre saying that Pune should



Cities chosen to be part of the plan will have to match the Centre's contribution for development and mobilize additional resources

be included in the programme. "Pune is among the most unique cities in the country with engines for growth like core industry, defence, education, IT & ITES. And to top it all, it is also the cultural capital of Maharashtra," the letter stated.

However, if the city gets selected for the programme, the PMC will have to set aside special funds for utilization under the Smart Cities Mission. The general body of the PMC has approved an annual

civic budget of Rs 4,479.50cr for the 2015-16 fiscal and set the local body tax (LBT) revenue target at Rs 1,495.58cr.

"However, once LBT is scrapped, the civic body will have to depend on the state government to fill this huge revenue gap that constitutes about 40% of the total civic budget revenue plan. In this case, the PMC will have to tap other revenue resources," said deputy mayor Aba Bagul.

In the first phase of the selection of smart city aspirants, each state will nominate a set of cities based on urban population and number of statutory cities for inclusion under the Smart Cities Mission.

This nomination will be based on a set of identified criteria to be suggested by the ministry of urban development. All such 100 nominated cities will be rigorously scrutinized against identified criteria for extending financial support by the Centre. Cities which are found to be deficient in some aspects would be given time to address the same and participate in the next round of competition.

Raut gets 6 yrs for escape & other offences

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Pune: The court of judicial magistrate first class (JMFC) S R Nimse on Saturday handed out a total of six years' prison term to Yogesh Raut for four offences, including that of escape from police custody.

Raut is the main accused in the October 2009 kidnap, rape and murder of software engineer Nayana Pujari and is facing a separate trial for that offence. On September 17, 2011 he escaped from police custody while he was being taken to the Sassoon Hospital for treatment. He was re-arrested on May 31, 2013 from Shirdi.

On Friday, the JMFC court held Raut guilty for the offences of escape from police custody, impersonation, forgery and use of forged documents as it was established that he had acquired a PAN card and driving license and was living under a fake identity while evading police.

Assistant public prosecutor Suchitra Narote said, "Raut has been given sentences of two years each for the offences of escape and forgery and 1 year each for impersonation and use of forged documents. All these sentences are to run consecutively. The 23 months and 16 days period he has spent in jail from the time of his re-arrest till the sentencing, will be set off against the overall prison term."

Narote said, "The consecutive terms sentencing was a rarity as the JMFC court relied on the provisions under Section 31 of the Code of Criminal Procedure which deals with punishment for several offences in a single trial and the court's power to issue consecutive sentences." The JMFC court is empowered to sentence maximum three years term, but Section 31 (2) (b) allows the court to hand out consecutive sentences for several offences in a single trial for a total period that does not exceed twice the amount of punishment the court is competent to inflict.

Soon, FOB to aid safe crossing of highway in Dapodi

Sachin Phulsundar



Crossing the Pune-Mumbai highway poses a danger to pedestrians

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Pune: The Pimpri Chinchwad Municipal Corporation (PCMC) will construct a foot overbridge (FOB) in Dapodi to make it safe for the PMPML bus commuters to cross the Pune-Mumbai highway. The civic body widened the highway from 42 metres to 61 metres around a year back.

The standing committee of the civic body recently approved a resolution for the appointment of a consultant, who will prepare the design and estimated cost of the FOB work in two months. It will take another three months to complete the tender process and appoint a contractor to implement the project. Construction of the FOB will be completed in nine months after the work order is issued, said a civic official.

Vijay Bhojane, spokesperson, BRTS cell said, "The civic body will be constructing a FOB to enable the bus commuters to cross the 61-metre wide highway safely. The civic body has made a provision of Rs 1 crore in its annual budget."

Sanjay Kate, corporator from Dapodi-Bopkhal area said, "Around 50,000 residents live in three wards of Dapodi who have been affected by the closure of the Dapodi chowk on the highway. To avoid long detours, many motorists take the wrong side of the highway to reach the nearest chowk. This has caused some minor accidents. The PCMC and traffic police must reopen the chowk for traffic."

Raju Savale, vice-president, environment cell of Pimpri Chinchwad unit of Maharashtra Navnirman Sena (MNS) said, "The highway was first widened to 42 metres around five years back. There was a traffic signal at the junction. It has now been widened to 61 metres by acquiring land of College of Military Engineering (CME). It is dangerous for people to cross the road."

Jai Singh Kate, another resident of Dapodi said, "People coming from Dapodi gaathan, old and new Sangvi, Pimpale Gurav and nearby areas cross the highway to take a bus to Bopodi, Khadki and Pune by risking their lives."

For techies-turned-writers, day jobs contribute to creative endeavours

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Pune: Coding complex software for big-ticket clients during the day and penning fictional tales of love, separation and drug lords by the night — a handful of IT professionals in the city are balancing twin careers and doing it quite well.

Creative instincts that refuse to be confined to office cubicles are driving these engineers to author books — not so much for the monetary gains that they may fetch, but for the joy of pursuing their love of writing.

Office deadlines, familial commitments and even sleep can take a back seat for the writer at work who weaves stories to transport him, as much as his prospective readers, to a world where they haven't been, or to experience situations far removed from their own mundane lives. For most of these IT professional-cum-writers, their global exposure, interactions with people of diverse cultures, access to technology and importantly, the discipline enforced at their place of work, contribute to their ability to pull it off successfully. And while they may

not be ready to give up their careers to pursue writing full-time, going a little off the career track for the sake of satisfaction is not such a difficult decision to make.

Gaurav Parab, who has just written 'Rustom and the Last Storyteller of Almora', a marketing manager with an IT major company. He believes his background with the company actually contributed to his endeavour as an author. "While I

have always been an avid blogger, I itched to write a full-fledged story. Working in the IT sector brings in a certain discipline and the drive to get things done. For me, work-related travel and meeting new people also contributed to fire up my imagination," he said. Parab said that he would get up early to work on his novel and would sit down with it again as soon as he returned in the evenings. "No matter how much you love your work, there are moments when you want to soar out of the office

dark and humourous book, about a debt-ridden man contemplating suicide, are a bit of all the people he has met in life, barring the 'IT-kinds'. "That's probably me lashing out at my work," Gaurav says jokingly. The IT companies where they work are generally encouraging of creative pursuits, and while they may not be too indulgent when it comes to allowing time-off to write, they make sure the writer among them gets ample recognition from fel-

WORDS OF PASSION

■ Work can get boring over a period of time

■ Writing is a creative release for pent up thoughts and soaring imagination

■ On-the-job experiences actually enrich the writing process

■ Time management is the key to balancing twin roles

■ Familial support is a major factor in successfully managing both

■ Writing gets better over a period of time

■ Being creative off-the-job improves performance at work

■ Writing cannot usually replace full-time career

cube, your mind wanders and starts creating fun new characters and you start thinking how their lives would be," he said.

The characters in Parab's

Writers speak



■ **Parul Sharma** | Author of 'Confess It! Because sometimes there is no tomorrow' (2015) was working with an IT giant in Pune when she wrote the book over a four-month period. While she is currently writing two more books simultaneously, she admits she can't do it everyday. Writing, she believes, flows naturally. She types out her thoughts on her mobile. While compromising on a few weekend outings is expected when trying to publish a book, familial support is the biggest pillar to lean on



■ **Sharath Komarraju** | Authored five books while working with an IT multinational, including 'Murder in Amaravati' (2012), 'Within the Family' (out next March), 'The Puppeteers of' (2013) and 'Banquet on the Dead' (2012).

low team members. Rohit Gore, a city-based writer who published three titles while working with a software company, is appreciative of the support he got from his employer. "While I could not ask my boss for leave so that I could finish my book, my company went out of its way to celebrate the end product. They gave it a lot of visibility by stocking it in the office library, displaying it in the book stall on the premises and actually appreciated my efforts at doing something different. I was branded as a sort of a role-model for my colleagues, and that is something you yearn for," he said.



■ **Sudipto Das** | Author of 'The Ekkos Clan' (2013) is working with a start-up in Bangalore. While he admits that balancing office with writing is challenging, it's the former which takes priority. He sits down to write after 10pm, often working late into the night. Writing the book took two years. Limited sleep took a toll and he fell ill often. While initially his family could not understand his passion, they came around

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Supportive and understanding families are, however, the pivot needed for balancing both roles, Gore points out. "My wife has been my strongest support. While there is a point beyond which one cannot compromise on family time, working full-time and writing on weekends and after office hours just makes you smarter about time management," he said.

There have been quite a few people from the IT background who have published books, as

from many other diverse backgrounds, explains Poulomi Chatterjee, editor-in-chief and publisher of a reputed publishing company. "But not all of them give up their careers to write," she said.

While the returns are immense, it is not easy to switch careers. It should remain a passion that allows the writer to flourish even while at work in office, asserts Alok Kumar, chief executive officer of a city-based IT company and the author of three books. "I write when I am stressed. Writing is a form of creativity which is needed even in the IT sector. Writing helps me hone my creative thinking all the time and directly helps me to perform better at my job. Such pursuits should be adopted by more people in the industry, which would translate into better companies and happier employees," he says.

In the competitive world of book writing, making money is not the motivation for a professional-turned-writer. What drives him/her is the feeling of accomplishment, believes Kumar.