



## YUVI, DHONI TURN BACK THE CLOCK

Series sealed as veterans help India to a total beyond England's reach, just about » P42



## MINDBENDER AT MAHALAXMI

A new studio in town is offering people their own motion-captured virtual reality experience, a la *Avatar* » P28

FROM THE EVENING EDITION

*It's now do or die for world's heaviest woman*



Few years ago Eman could sit up

Family says it is ready to do whatever it takes to fly down Eman Ahmed to Mumbai, including break their house down

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LYING helpless in her bed, 36-year-old Egyptian Eman Ahmed, who weighs 500 kg, is down to just one meal a day to stop herself from gaining kilos. That no airline has been willing to airlift her into Mumbai, where surgeon Dr Mufazzal Lakdawala is ready to operate on her, has left the family desolate. » P14

# DIGGING NEXT DOOR OPENS UP 35-FT ABYSS IN POSH JUHU BUILDING

Two watchmen fell into the chasm last week, residents living in mortal fear as foundation of Ivory Towers on Juhu shoreline weakens

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RESIDENTS of an upscale high-rise on Juhu Beach are living in fear. The Ivory Towers building complex, tucked into the Juhu Koliwada lane, Santacruz (W), has developed alarming fissures. Residents said this is due to construction on an adjacent plot where the digging has been so deep (35 feet down) that it has weakened the foundation of their 40-year-old building. » P06



The sinkhole (above) into which watchmen Raman Mangela (inset) and Mahendra Ram fell. Ram broke his arm. (Left) Iron supports in Pankil Mehta's home which he has been forced to vacate. PICS/POONAM BATHIJA



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## Guide steals South Korean tourist's cash and belongings

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A SOUTH Korean tourist's cash and belongings were stolen by a person claiming to be a guide, who even showed him around some of the city's spots for a day. The incident took place on January 16. The Azad Maidan police are investigating.

Chahunkyu Chadongyan (52) arrived in Mumbai on January 15 and met a guide at CST, who said he will show him around for a low price. They booked a taxi and started their journey from CST. The guide was identified as Ali Nepali (60).

The police said Ali took him first to Andheri and then Juhu. They saw Juhu Beach and Amitabh Bachchan's house. They also saw Salman Khan and Shah Rukh Khan's homes. Ali took him to Dharavi, later Mahalaxmi and Dhobi Ghat.

After finishing their tour, the South Korean offered him liquor that he'd brought from his country. They sat in a bar at Mahalaxmi to drink, and around 10 pm they arrived at CST, near Cama hospital. The victim got down from the taxi here saying he wanted to go to a toilet and Ali took off with his bag. When the South Korean returned, he saw Ali and his bag missing. The taxi driver told him that Ali had told him he would return in some time, someone had called him. They waited for more than half an hour, but when Ali did not return, the tourist went to the police.

Senior inspector Vijay Kadam said, "We have registered an FIR against Ali under sections 420(cheating), and 379 (theft). We are investigating the matter."

"The South Korean lost his bag which contained his camera, two Samsung mobile phones, an I-phone, a credit card, Malaysian currency, South Korean currency, Chinese currency and US dollars," he added.

# The leaning towers

Lives are at risk at an upscale residential facility on the Juhu Beach shoreline as deep digging of adjacent plot has weakened building foundations, forcing residents to vacate



Iron support inside the ground-floor flat where Pankil Mehta (below) lives with wife. PICS/POONAM BATHIJA

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On January 14, shaken residents claimed that the tiles in their weakened building, have become loose and hollow. "The foundation, which is sand, has been literally washed away. That day, it was full moon and high tide, when the water rises and rushes in. It has weakened the tiles in our compound to such a large extent that both our watchmen feel into a deep cavity beneath the tile," claimed residents, including building chairman Chirag Negandhi. The building's CCTV footage bears out the falling claim.

First floor resident S Agarwal said, "We were wakened by a loud noise around 2 am on Saturday. We saw a huge cavity, we could hear shouting. We rushed down to help the watchmen."

Raman Mangela, one of the watchmen, who was walking with a noticeable limp when this reporter visited the building yesterday, said, "I have been a watchman here for 10 years. I was on my late-night rounds with my compatriot Mahendra Ram on Saturday, when suddenly, a tile gave way and I slid into a gaping hole. It was pitch dark and Mahendra fell in too after a minute."

Both watchmen were eventually rescued, after a ladder was thrown into the pit. Ram has fractured his hand. Residents, by then, had rushed down to the compound as another section of tiles caved in. "It was a mini earthquake," they said.

### Turmoil in their lives

A visit to the building showed that coconut trees are tied



with rope, as they are in danger of keeling over because of weakness.

Pushpa Jerajani (79) said, "There have been repeated tremors... Our phones shake on the table, we are so scared." Agarwal said her 87-year-old father is admitted to Hinduja Hospital. "He is a heart patient. All this has added to his stress, immeasurably. My mother, who is 80, is looking after him." She then added sarcastically, "I am happy they are in Hinduja Hospital; at least, they are in a safe structure. Not like this one."

Many residents are afraid that they will have to leave the building, which now has support in the form of iron beams, in certain places, after being weakened. Husband-wife duo Vinay and Monisha Thadani had left for a few days but are back now.

All of them concur that they have never felt the building vibrate with the intensity it has throughout the four months of digging so far. Residents claim they have had meetings with Vineet Mittal, owner of the adjacent plot. "We expressed our fears. After the Saturday incident, we spoke to him over the phone, but he simply blamed it on the high tide!" said a resident.

Anguish and anxiety has been running high here. Soci-

**'We are in the process of an audit and it would be premature of me to comment on what has caused the problems. I will be able to say anything only after tests are done'**

Shailesh Mahimtura of Mahimtura Consultants, the structural engineer appointed by Ivory Towers

ety secretary Manjit Sawhney said, "We have our life savings here. Where will we go if we are told to vacate?"

"Most of us have not gone to work for the last few days, that's how engrossed we have been in trying to tackle this problem. We have had sleepless nights since that Saturday," said another resident, Seema Soni.

She added that residents keep vigil at night, in case of a collapse or further problem. "We have to be ready to run..."

### Forced to flee

The most affected is Pankil Mehta, a ground-floor resident, who has left his home since Saturday along with his wife Anal and their three-year-old son. "I am looking for alternative accommodation," he said, adding that his son is "disturbed by what has transpired." A visit to Pankil's home shows iron beams all over the house for support.



Society chairman Chirag Negandhi and secretary Manjit Sawhney (r)



The sinkhole (circled) in which watchmen Raman Mangela (inset) and Mahendra Ram fell



Coconut trees tied to stop them from keeling over

### Police action

An FIR was filed on January 14 at Santacruz police station. Senior inspector Shantanu Pawar confirmed, "An offence has been registered and we are investigating the matter."

### Political eye

Ameet Satam, BJP MLA (Andheri West), in a letter to executive engineer, building proposals, K-west ward Rasal, stated: "The said activity endangers the surrounding buildings and poses serious threat to life and society around it. I am startled that permission to dig 2 basements down can be given just adjacent to the beach as the strata in such location, is extremely loose and muddy..."

With the building in such dire straits, residents know these are desperate times which call for desperate measures, like leaving their homes and then beginning the enervating, cripplingly expensive and soul-sapping search for alternative accommodation in an unforgiving city when it comes to real estate.

A recent tweet to the Mumbai police and Mumbai Congress with a picture of the huge cavity because of weakened tiles in the compound sums up the atmosphere and reads: 'Dig deeper and build taller even if adjoining bldg caves risking 100 lives? Stop this work...'

In a matter of days, lives have turned upside down. It is evident that Ivory Towers is living on the edge. Literally.

### The other side

Girish David, Sterling Engineering consultancy services, structural engineer for the



Juhu Koliwada plot said: "This is with regard to an unfortunate incident that has taken place at a housing society in Juhu Koliwada, adjacent to a property which is under structural development by our firm. Immediately after the incident occurred, we assisted the society in repairing the damage caused by Force Majeure. We would like to emphasise that all construction work was undertaken only after having obtained all applicable permits and clearances. However, we have now adopted additional safety measures with regard to structural work. All possible precautions have been undertaken."