

Man detained for rape, murder of three children

Resembles sketch of suspect responsible for attacks

- By Pamela Raghunath, Correspondent
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Mumbai: The Mumbai Police have detained one person in connection with the kidnapping, rape and murder of three minor girls since February this year, in suburban Kurla in north-east Mumbai.

The Crime Branch department has detained a man who resembles the sketch of the alleged suspect released by the police on Sunday. Police said he is being questioned by investigators.

Police have been combing over 10,000 shanties at Vatsalyatai Nagar and Alidada Compound in the Nehru Nagar area of Kurla, from where the bodies were found.

Several teams had been formed with officers from various police stations and personnel from the Crime Branch to crack the case.

On Saturday, the body of the third victim, eight-year-old Nushrat Shaikh, was found dumped in a locked hutment after she had gone missing on June 6 when she was playing outside her home while her mother was in the kitchen.

On February 9 and March 7, two other girls were also kidnapped, raped and murdered.

While the body of a five-year-old was found stuffed in a gunny bag on a staircase in a building at Nehru Nagar, that of nine-year-old Anjali Jaiswal was found on the terrace of police headquarters opposite the Nehru Nagar police station.

Police say they see a pattern in the way the murders have been committed but are not ready to call him a serial killer.

Records

The police have sent DNA samples of 70 people, including that of a close relative of a police officer from Nehru Nagar, for testing at the Kalina Forensic Science Laboratory and are checking the record of history sheeters booked for molesting minors in the past.

With pressure mounting on the police, a senior inspector of Nehru Nagar police station, Prakash Kale, was transferred on Tuesday following his failure to nab the killers.

Following these three incidents, fear stalks the alleys of these slum localities with many families either not letting their children go to school or accompanying them to and fro.

Many worried residents say they have lost faith in the police.

On Tuesday, Maharashtra's home department announced a cash reward of Rs250,000 for anyone giving information to trace the killer.

BJP leader Gopinath Munde, who visited the families of the three girls, criticised the Congress-Nationalist Congress Party coalition for its "miserable failure" to maintain law and order.

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