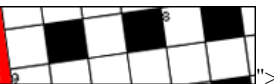


Want to Solve
Today's Crossword



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DEATHS UNEXPLAINED

With seven suicides reported in the city in the last two weeks, the police are trying to figure out the genesis of a trend which is fast gripping the society across all age groups. TOI reporters Soniya Tripathi & Mihir Tanksale give the lowdown

Increasing incidents of suicides in the city is a cause for concern. But more worrying is the rise in the number of well-educated youngsters taking the extreme step. After two deaths on Friday, the number of suicides in the last two weeks stands at seven, including two software engineers.

According to the Prevention of Crime Branch (PCB), as many as 529 people committed suicide in the city last year. Comparatively, 582 and 506 cases were reported in 2006 and 2005 respectively.

The PCB annual survey for 2007 says that around 161 took the extreme step due to family problems, 116 due to prolonged illness, 33 due to mental disturbance, 25 due to drug addiction, 16 due to unemployment and 14 following failed love relationships. Meanwhile, reasons like sudden change in economic conditions, marital problems and children related problems too played a role in certain cases.

The incidents of suicides due to drug addiction and unemployment dropped in 2007 as compared to the previous year. In 2006, around 23 people committed suicide due to unemployment, which came down to 16 in 2007. Similarly, people committing suicide due to drug addiction went down from 33 in 2006 to 25 in 2007.

However, the present trend shows that even the educated are opting for the easy way out, police officials said. "In 1999, on our records, around 400 people had committed suicide. A large number of them came from lower income groups. Now, even educated youngsters are taking the last recourse," the officials added.

The recent deaths of two software professionals is an indicator of the changing trend. Sandip Shelke, a techie with Persistent Systems, ended his life by jumping from the seventh floor of the office building on August 6, citing his inability to cope with work pressure.

What baffles the police is that the CCTV images before his suicide do not show any abnormal behaviour. "Sandip was seen walking freely and working on his laptop. We also enquired with his friends, who said that neither did he have any problems with anyone nor did he have any quarrel with any of his superiors," said sub-inspector U.K. Yadav.

"Probably, Shelke was bored with the mechanical life he was leading. We could gather that he was unable to spare quality time for himself due to the work pressure," Yadav added.

Niranjan Phadke, an IT professional and a social activist, feels that stress is the single most important factor behind suicides among techies. "Employees are promoted to middle and higher level management positions on the strength of their technical background. They may be technically sound, but are not necessarily good at managing people. This leads to undue stress which at times results in them taking the extreme step," he said. Proper training in inter-personal relationship management is necessary, he added.

Assistant commissioner of police (crime) Sangramsingh Nishandar believes work pressure is a major cause. Sometimes, work pressure coupled with family problems leads to suicidal tendencies among the youth.

But apart from work pressure, at times the inability to do the things which one actually wants to also leads to frustration. This was particularly observed in Shelke's case. Sometimes, personality traits and mood swings could drive an individual to end his life. Like Sarojkumar Nayak, another software professional who worked for Tech Mahindra, who hanged himself on August 18 last. The police have been recording the statements of his friends, who say he was a reserved person. "He hardly spoke to people and had only two friends in the city. Even with them, he interacted only regarding work," the police said.

Investigations have revealed that there was no apparent work pressure on Nayak. "He was free to come in at any time and leave after his work was over. Even on August 14, he reported at the office at around 1.30 pm and left at 6.30 pm," the police said. Nayak's personal diary has been found but the police have to decipher it since it is written in Oriya.

On Friday, a government contractor and an unidentified person committed suicide. Inability to accept and live with reality could be the reason for the contractor, Amar Mulane (39) of Kothrud, ending his life by slashing his wrist. His doctor had advised him three months' bed rest following pain in the spinal cord. A visibly disturbed Mulane killed himself at his farmhouse at Bhugaon. In the other incident, the unidentified person hanged himself from a tree at the Pune railway station.

CONNECTING WITH THE DISTRESSED

City-based NGO 'Connecting' initiated a helpline in June this year to lend a patient ear to those in distress. "We have been receiving at least two calls a day. The callers are from all age groups," Adithy, a psychologist and a member of Connecting, said. "Generally, the younger generation has a sense of worthlessness about their own being. They feel the world is hopeless and they are unable to change it. For the older generation, it's always a sense of being worthless for the family. Problems differ with age. Many complain of depression due to relationship issues and the generation gap. The distressed usually chose suicide to end their misery." Adithy said that prescribing a hobby for people in distress does not necessarily help as the individual may not find it interesting. "At times, they are told to take professional help like psychotherapy. However, the helpline's agenda is to allow a conversation and give a patient hearing to the distressed," she said. The helpline (9922001122) works for four hours a day between 4 pm and 8 pm. TNN



Shyam Sonar

The noose from which an unidentified person hanged himself to death on the Pune railway station premises on Friday

When & who

August 24 ▶
A housewife from Laltopi slums in Morwadi, Pimpri, committed suicide by hanging herself. Reason unknown

August 22 ▶
A government contractor slit his wrist. According to the Kothrud police, he was fed up with persistent back pain

August 22 ▶
An unidentified person is found hanging in the premises of the Pune railway station. Motive behind suicide unknown

August 18 ▶
A software engineer hanged himself at Hinjewadi. Reason unknown

August 16 & 21 ▶
Two women, one mentally disturbed, jumped from the third floor of the Sassoon hospital. No proper reason known

August 6 ▶
A techie jumped from the seventh floor of his office. The suicide note says he was not able to meet work expectations

July 14 ▶
Mahavir Manik Pandit alias Magdum (45) and his sons Manoj (22) and Vivek (19), all residents of Dighi, were found hanging from a tree on the Bhosari-Dighi road. Apparent reason: Fear of arrest after Magdum's wife had filed a complaint accusing him of trying to kill her

Graphic: Amir Shaikh