



Anti-Terror Squad

UNIVERSITY OF SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA, VITERBI



Prof Milind Tambe (left) with his student Praveen Paruchuri

Sriharikota-born researcher and his Mumbai-born professor help improve airport security in the US

JUGAL R. PUROHIT
Mumbai, October 7, 2007

It was his voracious appetite for research that made engineer Praveen Paruchuri leave home in Sriharikota for the US in 2002. It was this hunger again that made him stand out among his peers, and his thesis was picked up by security authorities at Los Angeles airport. The officials, who are seeking better measures to counter the increased threats posed by terrorists, are now trying it out, according to Praveen's professor, Milind Tambe (42).

'For security, police have to commit to a policy while their adversaries may observe and exploit the same.' This was the line underlying Praveen's research at the University of Southern California, Viterbi. Titled 'Keeping the Adversary Guessing: Agent Security by Policy Randomization', his programme was funded by the Department of Homeland Security's Centre for Risk and Economic Analysis of Ter-

rorism Events (CREATE).

"To interrupt or deter a terrorist plot in the surveillance phase is the safest and most efficient manner to protect the airport," said James Butts, director of law enforcement for Los Angeles airports. "This programme and technology directly addresses thwarting potential terrorists at the earliest stages of planning."

How it came about

Speaking to *Yuva*, Prof Tambe, who grew up in Mumbai and has parents living here, said that at the founding of CREATE, different professors were making presentations when it occurred to him that terrorists manipulate the fact that everything has a schedule. "So the idea of randomization came up," he said.

He posed the problem to Praveen. "We were at that time (in 2004) struggling with some results where randomization had to be addressed to solve a problem," Prof Tambe said.

"But we did not pay serious attention to it. Then it occurred to us that we could just focus on randomization as an important property of plans or schedules."

In May 2007, when Praveen's PhD was published, he presented his papers to police officers.

'Come home'

Praveen's father, a scientist with the Indian Space Research Organization, wants him to return and serve his own country. "I intend to do so," the 26-year-old told *Yuva* on telephone. "But for a few years, I want to work here."

According to him, the greatest reward for a researcher is when his research is put to practical use. Praveen wants to "make tools that will assist a cop and provide him with artificial intelligence".

But he does not see much scope for research in India. "In India, if I am doing a PhD, I am seen as someone who is getting into academics," he said. "Here, there are so many companies waiting to hire researchers. It's so much of encouragement."

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3 youths held for abducting biz man

RAJU PARULEKAR
Mumbai, October 7, 2007

Police on Saturday arrested three youths for allegedly detaining a 21-year-old businessman.

Police said Pramod Sharma (22), a resident of Goregaon, Rahul Desai (26), a resident of the GT Hospital servant quarters, and Sameer Omar Abdul Sheikh (20), a Santa Cruz (West) resident, abducted Neeraj Ruparel, a resident of Thakur Complex, from his Mangalam Ladies Shop in Akurli on Friday night.

They allegedly took Mr Ruparel to a place in Santa Cruz and assaulted him. They also allegedly threatened him to return the chain and bracelet of a girl, with whom he had been frequenting a pub in Juhu.

"They told Ruparel that they would be coming on Saturday to collect the valuables at Akurli," said Senior Police Inspector M.G. Sakpal of the Samta Nagar police station. "Ruparel then registered a complaint with the police, who laid a trap and arrested the trio on Saturday."

The three youths have been remanded in police custody till October 9.

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Birthday boy killed in car crash

RAJU PARULEKAR & KEYUR SETA
Mumbai, October 7, 2007

A teenager on his way to celebrate his birthday and a friend lost their lives after his car hit a lamppost on the Western Express Highway at about 2:45am on Sunday.

Sufian Khan and friends Zaid Khan (20), Shahid Sheikh (21), and Farzan Merchant (20) were heading for Hotel Fountain at Mira Road from Jogeshwari to celebrate Sufian's 20th birthday. But, at Balaji Dharamkata area in Borivli, he lost control, police said.

Sufian and Zaid died on the spot while Shahid and Farzan are battling for their lives at the intensive care unit of Nanavati Hospital. The car was smashed so badly that firemen had to use gas cutters to extricate the corpses.

Zaid was to marry on December 10.



The mangled remains of the Swift that Sufian was driving

Preliminary investigations indicated that Sufian was driving the car, a red Maruti Swift, at high speed. Police said a group of four other youngsters was driving alongside in a Tata Indigo. "It is possible that the two groups were racing and Sufian lost control," said Ravi Thakur, senior inspector at the Dahisar police station.

Police have ruled out the possibility of drunk driving. "It is a clear case of over-speeding," said Inspector Thakur.

Zaid's household at Mira Apartments in Oshiwara was in a state of shock. A second-year commerce student of NM College, Zaid aspired to be a businessman and had a promising future, said a relation. "The four boys were thick friends," said an aunt, who refused to divulge her name. "It's all over now. Allah

has been unkind to us." Two buildings away, the Shaikhs were hoping for Shahid's survival. Neighbours said the web designer was a well-behaved boy. "It's just bad luck," said his aunt, speaking to *Yuva* on the building's intercom. "We are praying that he survives."

Police crack down on erring motorists, p3