

# Ajmer man first Indian to get bilateral full-arm transplant after 15-yr struggle

33-year-old Prema Ram Choudhary lost both arms in 2008 after he accidentally touched a live wire outside his home near Ajmer. But now he has regained his wings and is about to take off

## DEFIANCE & DETERMINATION



**TIDING OVER TIME:** A doughty Prema Choudhary at the Seawoods railway station complex, just before one of his last commutes to Mumbai as an armless man



The surgery that gave him a new lease of life



First blood drawn after the transplant

**ROAD TO RECOVERY**  
Nerve sensation is restored at the pace of 1mm per day. So, to rebuild the nerves needed to transmit sensations from the brain to the tip of Prema's forefingers, it would take approximately 600 days

My goal is now to encourage people to donate organs  
—PREMA RAM CHOUDHARY

## THE SURGERY

Prema Ram Choudhary's hand transplant operation started at 12:45pm on February 10 and lasted 16 hours

Since the arms were severed at the shoulder level, it was not easy to find connective tissues and nerve endings to join the arms  
Dr Nilesh Satbhai | GLOBAL HOSPITAL

In elbow-down transplants, the patient takes up to a year to gain full use of new arm(s). But in full-arm transplant, this could stretch to two years



A month later, a force to be reckoned with

Shanth.Kumar1@timesgroup.com

Fifteen years after Prema Ram Choudhary lost both arms, he has become the first Indian to undergo a bilateral full-arm transplant, done in Mumbai. Most hand transplants are carried out around the elbow, but Prema needed full arms because of amputation close to the shoulder after an electric shock. "Only three or four full-arm transplants have been attempted across the world," the 33-year-old, who pursues a BEd degree, said.

Plastic surgeon Dr Nilesh Satbhai, who performed Prema's transplant in a 16-hour surgery in Global Hospital, Parel, on February 9, said a French team had done the world's first bilateral full-arm transplant less than two years ago. "Last year, Amrita Institute in Kochi performed a single full-arm transplant and there are reports of another such transplant from Germany," said Dr Satbhai, who has performed seven hand transplants in the last three years.

Hand transplants are rare as compared to, say, kidney transplants; less than 30 have been performed in India, including eight in Mumbai. In the four months that I have been following Prema, I realised why this transplant is done infrequently. For one, only a few families agree to do-



THE LAST ASSIST: Prema gets bathed at his Seawoods community home before leaving to get hospitalized for his arms transplant

nate the arms of a loved one declared brain dead, and, for another, care must be taken to choose a recipient with the mental frame for a protracted recovery period with daily physiotherapy. There also is

## TIMES Special

the cost, but hospitals help families raise the nearly Rs 30-lakh-plus bill through charity. I met Prema for the first time in December 2022, a few months after he registered for the transplant. Hailing from a middle-level farming family in Kotri, near Ajmer, he didn't have the resources to rent a flat in Mumbai and so began living in Jat Samaj Hall in Sea-

woods, Navi Mumbai. We would travel together for physiotherapy sessions to strengthen his shoulders so that they could carry the weight of his new arms later. It took weeks to gain enough trust of Prema and his brother so that I could start photographing them. Prema spoke about his family; he is the eldest among three brothers and his father works in a marble mine. During the summer holidays after his Class XII exams in 2008, he took up a job at the village power station to make some extra money. "On June 28 that year, I by mistake touched a live wire just outside my house and 11,000 volts of current passed through my body," he said. His arms had to

be amputated to save his life. What kept the 18-year-old sane was his father Mohan Lal's words of hope. "My father would tell me every day that something good would come our way. His positive attitude helped me," said Prema, who learnt to write with his feet and continued with his studies.

In 2019, he visited Amrita Institute in Kochi for the first time, but couldn't follow up due to the Covid lockdown. He arrived in Mumbai in 2022 after reading about Monica More, Mumbai's first hand transplant patient, and registered for surgery in August.

But the wait for a donor proved to be a daunting and long one; his name climbed to the top of the waiting list in January. On February 8, he had just returned to the Seawoods guest house after a physiotherapy session when the most awaited call came: "There is a potential brain-dead donor in Surat Civil Hospital."

The surgery done (see graphics for details), Prema is clearly happy, planning to register for the final exam of his BEd course. In his father Mohan Lal's words, "My son's 15-year-long *vanvas* (exile) is finally over. The first thing I will do now is register myself as an organ donor and help other people just like the good donor my son received." For video and more pictures, visit [epaper.timesgroup.com](http://epaper.timesgroup.com)

## HOW PREMA'S NEW ARMS FLEW IN FROM SURAT...

10.30 pm, Feb 9 | A team of four surgeons, Dr Chirag Bhansali, Dr Vashist Dikshit, Dr Kushal Shah and Dr Amit Surushe, left for Surat by road. They reach eight hours later, and start conducting tests to check the viability of donor arms

Once the full arms were retrieved, there was a race to ensure the organs reached Global Hospital, Parel, within six hours. The arms were rushed to Mumbai in an air ambulance. Green corridors at both Surat and Mumbai ensured that all was within stipulated time



On June 28, 2008, I by mistake touched a live wire just outside my house and 11,000 volts of current passed through my body. My arms had to be amputated to save my life  
Prema Ram Choudhary | TRANSPLANT PATIENT



## 50% concession for women in ST bus ticket fares

Mumbai: MSRTC launched the Mahila Sanman Yojana on Friday under which the state government will give 50% concession in ticket fares in all categories of ST buses to women. The decision to give this concession was taken in the state budget. An official said senior citizens aged above 75 can travel free of cost in any bus across the state, while those aged between 65 and 75 have 50% concession in tickets. **TNN**

## NCP's Jayant Patil flays Karnataka CM's comment

Mumbai: NCP leader Jayant Patil on Friday objected to "anti-Maharashtra" comments of Karnataka CM Basavaraj Bommai and said he was making such comments since his state faced elections. "He has criticised our decision to provide our health scheme Jan Arogya Yojana to 865 border villages. He called it an unpardonable offence. He is saying such things as Karnataka is facing polls. The government must make note of it," he said in the state assembly. **TNN**

## MU organises seminar today

Mumbai: University of Mumbai and Renaissance Universal & Renaissance Artists and Writers Association (RAWA) has organised a seminar on "Dimensions of Prabhat Ranjan Sarkar" on Saturday at 10am at the Kalina campus.

## Sena (UBT) to go to court on BMC ₹263 crore street furniture tender

Chaityana.Marpakwar @timesgroup.com

Mumbai: Shiv Sena (UBT) leader and former minister Aadiya Thackeray on Friday said his party would go to court against BMC's Rs263 crore street furniture tender, and alleged there was a 100% cost escalation in items BMC was to buy under the project. Aadiya took up the issue two months after BJP MLA Mihir Kotecha had alleged there was "match-fixing" in this tender. In a letter to municipal commissioner Iqbal Chahal in January, Kotecha had predicted the company was to win the tender by allegedly manipulating sample testing. BJP had said there was a "grand match-fixing" in

this project and had given the name of the winning company to Chahal. "We don't know if the BMC administrators are bureaucrats or dictators as the entire administration is functioning in an opaque way. All orders are given by the urban development (UD) department, which is the CM's office. Kotecha had written to BMC, he's from the ruling party, and not from our party. Cost of all items has been escalated. We don't even know what items they are and there was cartelization in the tenders since they are buying all items from one contractor. They will install planters and benches... 40,000 benches. We know the unconstitutional CM likes to see empty chairs

in his rallies, but where is BMC going to put these benches?" Aadiya said. "This scam has been exposed by a BJP MLA and even he has received bogus replies. We will go to court with this and demand an enquiry. But when our government comes to power, we will start enquiries in all these scams and those guilty will have to go to jail." Aadiya said at Vidhan Bhavan on Friday. Following Kotecha's allegations, BMC had said it decided to buy all the 10 street furniture items through a single agency to maintain uniformity with standard specifications across wards. BMC had said due diligence was adhered to while processing the tender and the accusation of

any scam was refuted. BMC also said all samples of bidders had passed the testing criteria. "To avoid different agencies working simultaneously on any stretch of footpath thereby indulging in multiple excavations, leading to chaos, work will be supervised and executed by traffic department engineers. This will ensure proper planning, supervision and sequential quality work. Again, traffic and road department engineers are well-versed with 'pedestrian first policy'. For some items, defect liability period is of 10 years, thereby ensuring stringent quality," BMC had said, adding that requirements from ward offices were consolidated.

## Locals observe bandh in Matheran over e-ricks

Umesh K Parida

Navi Mumbai: The Matheran locals observed a day-long shutdown to press for their demand to restart the e-ricks-haw service and continue the paver blocks laying work at the hill station. While several people participated in the event on Friday, the environmentalists have reiterated that since Matheran is an eco-sensitive zone, further introduction of motor vehicles like e-rickshaws (and later e-buses) will destroy the hill station, making it like any other congested city suburb. The citizen forum 'Matheran Paryavaran Sambadansheel Nagrik Manch' organised bandh saw the shops and hotels closed since morning. The locals, hoteliers, joined by

school children, Divyansh took part in the protest march between Ram Chowk and the revenue superintendent office. They handed over their demand letter to the Revenue Superintendent and Municipal Council Chief Officer. A Matheran resident Surekha Shinde said, "During the lockdown the horse owners/handlers had laid the paver blocks while working as daily wage workers. E-ricks-haw service is required for the elderly, school children, those with health issues, etc in the absence of alternative transport. In these e-rickshaws, students get more time to study while women get a safe commute to drop and pick children from school. Clay blocks reduce dust and are hygienic from health point of view."

## Family of mason killed in mishap gets ₹13 lakh

Thane: Kin of a mason killed in a mishap in 2018 were awarded Rs13 lakh by the Motor Accident Claims Tribunal of Thane recently. The claimants, who includes the widow and two sons of Suresh Madke, from Shirgaon in Shahpur, sought compensation as the sole breadwinner died. Counsel S M Pawar told MACT that Madke was at 7.20pm on February 1, 2018, riding motorcycle with his cousin towards Shirgaon on the Shahpur-Murbad road. A jeep from the opposite direction, in rash and negligent manner, dashed the motorcycle. Madke fell down and sustained injuries, and died while being treated at KEM hospital. Subsequently, a case was registered with the local police station. The family contended that the deceased was 45 at the time of the accident and earned Rs30,000 per month as a mason. He was the sole breadwinner in the family and the family lost its support, for which they sought compensation from the owner of the jeep and the insurance company. While granting the compensation, MACT member M M Walimohammed ordered the driver of the jeep and the insurance company to jointly pay the compensation to the claimants along with 8% per annum interest from the date of filing of the claim. —Nishikant Karlikar

## Two residents of hsg soc die by suicide

Mumbai: Two residents of a housing society in Kandivli died by suicide in separate instances in a span of two days. In the first case on March 14, Meena Marthuvhar, 52, hung herself from the ceiling fan while she was alone at Jay Bharat society in Laljipada. Marthuvhar worked as a househelp. Police said she had frequent tiffs with her family members and wouldn't let her grown children enter the house if they returned past 10 pm. According to the police, one of her sons got married eight months ago. Her daughter-in-law was two months pregnant when she had a miscarriage. This was very upsetting for Marthuvhar. On March 13, her son and daughter-in-law had gone to the hospital for a check up. However, she wouldn't open the door when they returned. Eventually they forced the door open and found her hanging from the ceiling fan using a saree. In the second case, a 21-year-old boy jumped to his death from the 19th floor of Jay Bharat society, Laljipada. Ajinkya Rajput, the deceased, lived on the same floor of the society. He died by suicide at around 5am, police said. He was pronounced dead at the Babasaheb Ambedkar Hospital. His uncle told the police that they do not suspect any foul play. Two entries of accidental deaths have been recorded. **TNN**

## BMC to create interactive urban green space for citizens at Nepeansea road

Sanjeev.Devasia @timesgroup.com

Mumbai: The BMC will create an urban green space in an area adjoining the RBI quarters on Nepeansea road. The civic body will be using set back spaces given by societies in the vicinity for the same. The BMC's D ward has envisaged a walkway amid the green, multi-use furniture for seating, a sloping garden redesigned into a stepped up public plaza, besides lawns for gathering and a mini skateboarding rink, among other features, at the green zone.

"We are looking at developing various abandoned spaces, which includes set back spaces provided by various buildings. These spaces are usually left unused and some are enclosed, we can develop the same based on a theme. In this case, we are developing a green space in an area of 1,700 square meters. The area is not even and has slopes," said a BMC official from D ward. A meandering walkway connecting all the green stretches, inundated with plants, shrubs, etc, will be created on the space. The space will have a gabion parapet wall incor-

porated with seats. Apart from planter beds, the green space will also have multi-use furniture for seating and for engaging people. Decks will be created for various kinds of performances. "The idea is not just a green space, but to have an interactive space where people can come rest and interact with others. From singing, to playing music, or having a session of stand-up comedy, the space will enable a variety of recreational activities. Citizens can hold small informal meetings or even some kind of recreational sessions,

such as a laughter club, etc, at the space," the official added. The official said that the mini skateboarding rink can be used by youths and children. To give people an interactive experience, the BMC will use digital technology. Interventions such as QR codes and a website will be made available for the park, which will offer information to visitors about the prominent places, facilities and also the personalities staying in the ward, said the official. "The space should be ready within a month's time," said the D ward official.