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## METRO CABLE THEFTS

# Four members of inter-state gang arrested in Gandhinagar

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FOUR MEMBERS of the inter-state Khekda gang were arrested on Saturday in connection with the theft of 700 metres of wire cabling, worth Rs 17.85 lakh, from the metro station near the Juna Koba Metro station in Gandhinagar on June 2, said Gandhinagar police.

Police identified the accused as Musharraf Irshad Mulejat (32), Rashid Ishaq Ishmael Dhobi (21), Rashid Abdulaziz Shabbir Ansari (45) and Irshad Majid Allahmehar Malik Teli (33), all residents of Baghpatt in Uttar Pradesh.

The theft had come to the fore late night on June 2 after the IPL cricket match got over, said police. The Juna Koba Metro station falls in the jurisdiction of Infocity police station. Soon after the theft, SP Ravi Teja Vasamsetty had set up four teams, including officials from the Local Crime Branch (LCB) to crack the case.

While probing the CCTV footage, the police identified two suspicious looking vehicles, said officials.

After the police managed to extract the registration plates of the two vehicles, they found the owner of the vehicles who gave them the names of the accused persons, said the police.



The accused have carried out similar theft 14 times in Delhi; 12 times in Pune and six times in Panvel, said police. Express

Meanwhile, the LCD personnel received a tip-off about the accused being present in Kalol town of Gandhinagar.

The police reached the spot and arrested the accused. The police also recovered several pieces of the copper cables, worth Rs 8 lakh from the accused.

The accused have been arrested under BNSS Sections 35(1)(e) (right to arrest without warrant) 35(1)(e) (right to arrest without warrant) and 106(1) (seizure of property).

A statement from Gandhinagar Police on Saturday said that when the four men were questioned, they allegedly revealed "the role of a total 13 persons involved in the theft of the cables". The accused also confessed to have stolen copper

cables from the Shahpur Metro station on May 22, said the police statement. According to the police, one of the accused — Masoom Yasin Malik — along with another set of thieves, was involved in stealing cables from Gyaspur Metro station.

Apart from theft of Metro cables in Gujarat, the accused also allegedly confessed to theft of the same material from Metro projects across the country. The accused have carried out similar theft 14 times in Delhi; 12 times in Pune and six times in Panvel of Navi Mumbai, both in Maharashtra. They also confessed to thefts in Indore and Bhopal of Madhya Pradesh.

The Gandhinagar police named 11 others, still absconding, as part of this Khekda gang. One of the accused, identified as

Raja Qureshi, said the police, was allegedly involved in almost all the thefts across various states. He was also their buyer and financed the theft, said the police.

### Modus Operandi

The Gandhinagar police said that the accused used to target Metro projects across India. They would first book hotel rooms near the stations and hire cars. They would then approach a real estate broker to rent a house where they could stash their stolen material, said the police.

They would then conduct their reconnaissance along the Metro route. After deciding on an appropriate spot, they would park their rented vehicles near a pillar and use a tree to make a zipline to the top of the pillar to reach the tracks, according to the police. They would then cut the cables using large cutters and load them onto their vehicles and hide the loot in their rented house, said the police.

They would then make the effort to pry the copper cabling from the rubber insulation, pack it in parcels and then send them to Delhi in parcels through the railways. They would then sell it in Delhi, said the police.

A police probe into the matter is ongoing and the cops are trying to arrest the other members of the gang in coordination with police officials in other states.