

Stabbed Indian student 'stable' , Melbourne cabbies end protest

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Sydney, April 30 (IANS) Protesting Melbourne taxi drivers, many of them from the sub-continent, have won in their push for improved safety for drivers as the stabbed Indian overseas student, who was working as a part-time taxi driver, was said to be in a "stable" condition Wednesday. The police charged a 45-year-old man with attempted murder of the 23-year-old Jalvinder Singh. Parish Charles of Bennett Street in suburban Alphington was arrested at his home at 7.30 p.m. Tuesday and has been charged with attempted murder by Yarra Criminal Investigation Unit detectives.

The near fatal stabbing of Jalvinder Singh in the Clifton Hill suburb of Melbourne Tuesday had been the trigger for the taxi drivers' blockade in the heart of Melbourne since then. The drivers were late Wednesday afternoon assured by the Victorian State government that mandatory safety screens would be fitted to their vehicles. Transport Minister Lynne Kosky told reporters: "We aim to have those screens rolled out within the next 12 months, but hoping to have them rolled out prior to Christmas."

The said the government had also agreed to pre-paid fares between 10 p.m. and 5 a.m. "as soon as possible" both in metropolitan and regional areas.

The government has also agreed to pay the medical and rehabilitation costs for the injured Indian driver.

"His condition is stable and he has been taken off the critical care list," said Rod Jackson Smith, media manager for Royal Melbourne Hospital, where Jalvinder Singh was admitted in a critical condition.

Earlier, taxi drivers had threatened to blockade Melbourne airport if their demands were not met. Many drivers had ripped off their shirts and blocked Melbourne's busiest intersection disrupting peak hour morning traffic, chanting "we want justice" and "shame, shame Victoria police". Others held placards reading "stop killing the drivers" and "help us".

The driver's demands included compensation to the stabbing victim, severe punishment for the offender, improved safety, fitting vehicles with protective or security screens, pre-paid taxi rides, and special protection at certain railway stations and suburbs after hours.

Victorian Taxi Drivers Association secretary Pritam Singh Gill said: "The drivers are very upset with this. The government promised us security and safety for drivers more than 18 months ago and they haven't done anything so far."

The injured Indian student was found by a passerby just before 6 a.m. (AEST) Tuesday in a critical condition, covered in blood with multiple stab wounds to the upper body. His taxi was found a short distance away smashed into a street sign.

Detective Senior Constable Brendan Smith told reporters the police had found the abandoned crashed taxi at about 3 a.m. (AEST) but could not immediately find the driver.

Late last year, another taxi driver of Indian origin had sustained stab wounds inflicted by a fare-evading passenger. Baljinder Singh, 25, had told reporters: "I don't think I will drive cabs (again). I'm not scared but there's always a risk to your life."

Earlier, calls for more security for Melbourne taxi drivers from violent passengers were intensified when in August 2006, a 27-year-old part-time taxi driver, Rajneesh Joga, was killed when a 20-year-old man tried to hijack his taxi by pushing him out of the moving vehicle.

Joga, who hailed from Hyderabad, was doing his master of accountancy at the Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology (RMIT).

Since then there have been a series of violent incidents.

"Last time one of the taxi drivers was killed, the government promised us there will be taxi shields inside the cabs. We are treated like second-class citizens in Australia," Sunny Singh of suburban Blackburn was quoted as saying by media.

There are about 12,000 Indian overseas students enrolled in various universities in Melbourne and many of them drive taxis part-time to support themselves and meet the increasing cost of living. Cabbies threaten to blockade Melbourne airport after Indian's stabbing

Sydney, April 30 (IANS) Taxi drivers Wednesday threatened to blockade Melbourne airport as a 45-year-old man was charged with attempted murder following a stabbing attack on an Indian student, who was working as a part-time taxi driver, in the Clifton Hill suburb. Parish Charles of Bennett Street in suburban Alphington was arrested from his home at 7.30 p.m. Tuesday and has been charged with attempted murder by Yarra Criminal Investigation Unit detectives. He has appeared before an out of session's court hearing and has been remanded to appear at Melbourne Magistrates Court Wednesday.

Meanwhile, taxi drivers, mostly from the Indian sub-continent, are threatening to blockade the Melbourne airport if their demands are not met. Many drivers ripped off their shirts and sat down at Melbourne's busiest intersection disrupting peak hour morning traffic, chanting "we want justice" and "shame, shame Victoria police", others held placards reading "stop killing the drivers" and "help us".

They are demanding compensation to the stabbing victim, severe punishment for the offender, improved safety, fitting vehicles with protective or security screens, pre-paid taxi rides, and special protection at certain railway stations and suburbs after hours.

State Public Transport Minister Lynne Kosky has told reporters that she will not negotiate with the drivers until they end their blockade.

Kosky told reporters: "I understand that cabbies get very upset, they do get quite a fair bit of abuse from only a few, a handful of passengers, but they do cop that which is unacceptable. But I think now it's time to, now they've made their point, cease the blockade and we'll meet with them, we'll continue to talk about safety needs and I know the police are keen to do the same."

About 300 taxi drivers had blockaded a major intersection in the heart of Melbourne's Central Business District during peak traffic hour Tuesday evening.

Pritam Singh Gill, secretary of the Victorian Taxi Drivers Association, said: "The drivers are very upset with this. The government promised us security and safety for drivers more than 18 months ago and they haven't done anything so far."

The 23-year-old Indian student was found by a passerby just before 6 a.m. (AEST) Tuesday in a critical condition, covered in blood with multiple stab wounds to the upper body.

A Victoria Police spokesperson told IANS: "We won't be releasing his name because none of his family is in Australia. He is in a serious but stable condition at the Royal Melbourne Hospital."

He was stabbed several times in the chest apparently by a passenger and left to die outside a hotel in the Clifton Hill suburb of Melbourne in freezing conditions.

"It appears the offender then drove the taxi a short distance before it collided with a street sign," the official said.

Detective Senior Constable Brendan Smith told reporters the police had found the abandoned crashed taxi at about 3 a.m. (AEST) but could not immediately find the driver.

Earlier, calls for more security for Melbourne taxi drivers from violent passengers were intensified when in August 2006, a 27-year-old part-time taxi driver, Rajneesh Joga, was killed when a 20-year-old man tried to hijack his taxi by pushing him out of the moving vehicle.

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"Last time one of the taxi drivers was killed, the government promised us there will be taxi shields inside the cabs. We are treated like second-class citizens in Australia," Sunny Singh of suburban Blackburn was quoted as saying by local media.

Late last year, another taxi driver of Indian origin sustained stab wounds inflicted by a fare-evading passenger. Baljinder Singh, 25, had told reporters: "I don't think that I will drive cabs (again). I'm not scared but there's always a risk to your life."

There are about 12,000 Indian overseas students enrolled in various universities in Melbourne and many of them drive taxis part-time to support themselves. Melbourne cabbies protest attack on Indian student cab driver

Sydney, April 29 (IANS) Hundreds of taxi drivers blockaded a major intersection in the heart of Melbourne Tuesday after an Indian student, who was a part-time taxi driver, was found with severe stab wounds early morning.

The 23-year-old Indian student was found by a passerby just before 6 a.m. (AEST) Tuesday in a critical condition, covered in blood with multiple stab wounds to the upper body.

"He is an Indian student but we won't be releasing his name because none of his family is in Australia. He is in a critical but stable condition at the Royal Melbourne Hospital," a Victoria Police spokesperson told IANS.

He was stabbed several times in the chest apparently by a passenger and left to die outside a hotel in the Clifton Hill suburb of Melbourne in freezing conditions.

"It appears the offender then drove the taxi a short distance before it collided with a street sign," the official said.

Detective Senior Constable Brendan Smith told reporters the police had found the abandoned crashed taxi at about 3 a.m. (AEST) but could not immediately find the driver.

"We'd say that he's received stab wounds... and we're receiving regular updates from the hospital as to his condition. We're still unclear as to what happened in the taxi, but for a man to receive stab wounds and end up in a critical condition in hospital is obviously a very vicious attack and, if completely unprovoked, is very, very concerning," Smith said.

Yarra Criminal Investigation Unit detectives have released three images of a man they believe can assist with their investigation and detectives are urging him to come forward and hand himself in to the nearest police station.

Meanwhile, about 300 taxi drivers, mostly from the Indian sub-continent, began staging a protest at 6 p.m. during peak traffic hour at the corner of Flinders and Swanston streets in the heart of Melbourne's Central Business District.

Said Pritam Singh Gill, secretary of the Victorian Taxi Drivers Association: "The drivers are very upset with this. The government promised us security and safety for drivers more than 18 months ago and they haven't done anything so far."

The taxi drivers are demanding better safety and fitting of protective security screens immediately in their vehicles.

State Public Transport Minister Lynne Kosky told reporters: "It's obviously a very distressing incident and it's certainly something that we're very concerned about in terms of safety in taxis."

Earlier, calls for more security for Melbourne taxi drivers from violent passengers were intensified when in August 2006, a 27-year-old part-time taxi driver, Rajneesh Joga, was killed when a 20-year-old man tried to hijack his taxi by pushing him out of the moving vehicle.

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There are about 12,000 Indian overseas students enrolled in various universities in Melbourne and many of them drive taxis part-time to support themselves.

Indian student taxi driver stabbed in Melbourne

Sydney, April 29 (IANS) A 23-year-old Indian student, who was also working as a taxi driver, was found Tuesday stabbed outside a hotel in the Clifton Hill suburb of Melbourne, the police said.

"He is an Indian student but we won't be releasing his name because none of his family is in Australia. He is now in a stable condition at the Royal Melbourne Hospital," a Victoria Police spokesperson told IANS.

The Indian student driver was found in a critical condition just before 6 a.m. Tuesday, covered in blood with multiple stab wounds to the upper body. He was lying out in the freezing cold, about 500 metres from the taxi which had been smashed into a power pole.

Detective Senior Constable Brendan Smith told reporters that the police had found the abandoned crashed taxi at about

3 a.m. but could not immediately find the driver.

"We'd say that he's received stab wounds... and we're receiving regular updates from the hospital as to his condition. We're still unclear as to what's happened in the taxi, but for a man to receive stab wounds and end up in a critical condition in hospital is obviously a very vicious attack and if completely unprovoked is very, very concerning," Smith said.

The police believe he may have been attacked by a passenger. They are appealing for witnesses to come forward with any information and are examining the CCTV cameras in the area for clues to the attack. A backpack was found on the footpath nearby.

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