

SOAP STAR LOSES ₹2 LAKH TO ATM HACKERS

Over the past fortnight, Oshiwara police have filed 10 cases of debit cards being compromised in the area, including that of the TV actor's; cops say these hackers are hard to trace

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THE country's strides in IT-enabled services have had an unfortunate side-effect – the unethical hacking of ATMs. Its latest victim is Miss India Earth 2002 Reshmi Ghosh, who became popular as Bhumii from *Kyunki saas bhi kabhi bahu thi*, who had Rs 2 lakh stolen from her compromised account. In the past two weeks, more than three police officers and six others have also registered cases with the Oshiwara police complaining that cash has been withdrawn from their Axis Bank accounts by hackers.

The police have registered FIRs in the cases and forwarded them to the Mumbai police's cyber cell.

On July 27, Ghosh's father, Subroto, deposited a cheque in a Kolkata branch of the Axis Bank when he learnt that Rs 2 lakh had been withdrawn from the account through a debit card. Following this, Subroto called Reshmi, but the latter denied withdrawing any cash.

Three days before that, Subroto had withdrawn Rs 15,000 from the account and the balance had stood at around Rs 4 lakh.

"It is a joint account held by my father and me, and we have two debit cards for it. My father usually takes care of the transactions. On July 27, my father called me up to ask about a withdrawal to the tune of Rs 2 lakh over two days. I was shocked. I rushed to the bank's Lokhandwala branch and immediately stopped all payments," Reshmi said.

On August 6, Reshmi then



CONNED: Reshmi Ghosh

registered a case of hacking with the Oshiwara police station.

Cops said that when a debit card is swiped, say, in a mall, hackers are tuned in to the mall's machines using high-tech

equipment.

They copy the card's details, including the CVV number, and pass them on to duplicate cards and remove money from the account. Ghosh's debit card was used at different ATMs between July 25 and 26, including those of Bank of Baroda in Santacruz, where transactions have been made seven times, and Standard Chartered in Koparkhairane, where six transactions happened.

"We have registered a case, but tracing the hacker(s) is difficult. We will now check the CCTV footage from the ATMs when the withdrawals occurred. The cyber crime department is looking into the technical aspect of the hacking," said PI Vijay Kadam of the Oshiwara police station.

Bank official says

A spokesperson for Axis Bank said, "We have received complaints from a few customers that cash has been withdrawn from their accounts from other banks' ATMs. While we are investigating these complaints, we would like to inform that on August 1, Axis Bank filed an FIR with the cyber cell police station at Crawford Market about the discovery of an extraneous device attached to one of its off-site ATMs in Mumbai during a routine examination. We are providing necessary assistance to the investigating agency. Also, we will try to compensate our customers and reimburse the loss they have suffered."

Ghosh has also acted in TV serials *Kahe Naa Kahe* and *Karam Apnaa Apnaa* and participated in the dance reality show *Nach Baliye 4*.