BORIVLI: The Charkop schoolgirl who claimed to have been abducted and raped by a gym instructor on September 15, had actually spent the entire day hanging around with a male friend whom she had met on the internet, the police said.

Santosh Kumar Sharma (20), told the police that he would chat regularly with the girl on the internet but he met her for the first time on September 15. The girl met him at 3 pm at IC Colony— the same place she claimed to have been raped at—and they went for a long walk to Gorai.

Sharma added that he became suspicious when she insisted she had to stay outside till 7.30 pm. According to the girl's complaint, she was dropped back to Charkop by the abductors at this time. The police have already recorded Sharma's statement before the magistrate on Friday.

He is being projected as a witness in the case. Speaking to TOI, Sharma, a Borivli resident, said he first saw the girl in April at a cyber cafe at Charkop where he was employed. "She was a regular customer and I wanted to be friends with her so I got hold of her chat ID.

We talked about all kinds of things and common interests. She did not know that all this while I was working at the same internet cafe," he said. Sharma said the online chatting sessions went on for almost two months.

"I had started liking her but she was dating someone else. She was quite frank about her past relationships. Towards the end of May, I quit my job..."
and went to my hometown. After that, we were out of touch for four months till she suddenly called up in September." Sharma said he was not sure why she wanted to see him so desperately.

"She called me a number of times and said we had to meet. I was not enthusiastic since I was looking for a job but she persisted." The girl finally decided that they would meet on September 15 at IC Colony in Borivli where Sharma lived. "She hadn't seen my locality earlier so I took her around to a park and a club.

Later, we went to Gorai beach and talked for a long time. I kept trying to slip away but she said we had to hang out till 7.30 pm, which I thought was quite strange," he said. It was only last week that Sharma discovered about the rape case and gym instructor Kamlesh Ahire's arrest.

The girl had claimed that six boys had abducted her from Charkop at 2.30 pm and whisked her off to an apartment at IC Colony where she was raped by one of them. Ahire, named as prime accused in her complaint, was arrested. However, the police could not find a single witness who had seen the girl being abducted.

The medical analysis also did not go in her favour. The police are now seeking Ahire's release and discharge from the case on the basis of Sharma's statement.

In an application to the court, the police have said they have not been able to find any evidence against Ahire. The matter will be heard on Tuesday.