



Probe launched into issuance of living man's death certificate

Officials say procedure to cancel document lengthy, the police to look into cremation carried out by his family back in 2020

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THE local nagar panchayat and police in Patna have initiated a preliminary inquiry to examine the circumstances in which a death certificate was issued in the name of Sanjay Kumar, 44, a mentally ill man who had gone missing four years ago.

mid-day in its article 'Mentally ill homeless man 'returns from dead' dated November 2, had highlighted how Sanjay was ultimately reunited with his kin. The man, who had been found loitering in Kerala, was sent by a rehabilitation centre at Kasargod to the Shraddha Rehabilitation Centre at Karjat a few months ago. In June 2020, the local police handed over a body of an accident victim, which was later cremated.

mid-day spoke to the staff at Nagar Parishad Danapur Nizam-

at, Patna where the death certificate was issued and a senior cop of Patna district on the matter.

Manoranjan Kumar, an assistant at the death and birth department at Nagar Parishad Danapur Nizamat, said, "In my five years of service, I have never heard of such a case. We are checking our records and will discuss the matter with our superiors. As per their direction, we will take the next step."

Asked if they have the power to cancel the death certificate, Manoranjan said, "Usually, the cancellation procedure is lengthy and done through court directives. In this case, we will have to first obtain the original death certificate that was issued to the family on June 10, 2020. As per our standard operating procedure, a death certificate is only issued after having relevant documents from the next of kin, including a written application."



Sanjay Kumar (in yellow T-shirt) with his family at his Patna residence; (right) mid-day's November 2 report on the long-suffering man's emotional reunion with his family

Manavjeet Singh Dhillon, senior superintendent of police, Patna, said, "Usually a local committee or panchayat writes to the authorities concerned (nagar parishad or municipal council or municipality) informing them about the person being alive, and by following due process of law, the death certificate can be cancelled. Usually, a death certifi-

Mentally ill homeless man 'returns from dead'

Patna resident, who was missing in 2018 and was presumed dead in accident, was now in Kerala from Kerala a few months ago. He was reunited with his kin after the cremation of a body.

cate is issued on basis of a hospital or doctors' cause of death certificate and the cremation receipt. Some people perform the last rites on river banks near a ghat and in such cases, they produce a ghat receipt, on the basis of which entries are made in the death register and accordingly a death certificate is issued."

Asked about the identity of

the person cremated in 2020, Dhillon said, "We will inquire into the matter. The area where the family resides comes under the Digha police station. As COVID protocols were being strictly adhered to during the said period (June 2020), there were restrictions even on cremation and last rites. The probability of mistaken identity, while handing over the body, cannot be ruled out. We will also check if the next of kin had claimed the government compensation of ₹2 lakh, which was announced during the COVID period by the state government."

Sanjay's father, Nand Lal Sav, said the family neither claimed nor received compensation after June 2020. "As COVID restrictions were in place, we were informed by the local (Digha) police about a dead body resembling and matching the description of Sanjay. We presumed it to be our Sanjay's body and did the final rites," he said.

He added, "He (Sanjay) has been very silent since he has returned, though he is smiling

and remembers everyone. We are not taxing him by asking unsolicited questions. Also, we do not keep him unaccompanied. Someone or the other from the family is always with him even if he steps out and during the nighttime."

Asked if the family informed the local police about Sanjay's return, he replied in the negative.

Meanwhile, inspector Manoj Singh, who was in charge of Digha police station in 2020 told mid-day, "I was recently transferred out of Digha police station, but I do not remember this particular case, as it is two years old. The family of the person who has returned home alive will need to approach the local police and complete the procedure for cancellation of the death certificate. If needed, the police may reopen the old case and will have to establish the identity of the deceased who was cremated. The police may have taken photographs of the dead body found then and may need to check the case record."