

Forensics awaiting answers from Versova police

A month down the line, the expert panel probing the mysterious deaths of the Chougale siblings is still waiting for the answers to five crucial questions

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THE four-member forensics expert panel formed to probe the mysterious death of Versova siblings Rameez (25) and Rehab Chougale (27) on July 3-4, are awaiting police feedback on five crucial questions they had raised during their meeting at Nagpada police hospital exactly a month ago.

The expert panel, which includes police surgeon Dr S M Patil, Dr Shailesh Mohite, head

and professor, Forensics Medicine, Nair Medical College, Dr Gajanan Chavan, associate professor, Forensics Medicine, Grant Medical College and Suhas Bhakre, head and expert, Toxicology, State FSL, Kalina, have apart from suggesting the exhumation of the sibling's bodies, also asked for some specific questions related to the case (See Box).

"Though answers to some of the above queries raised by the expert committee are very

crucial, the final report will be prepared only after exhumation and subsequent findings thereafter, and also after getting police response to the above queries," said a forensic expert.

Versova police had written to the local tehsildar and the health department seeking their permission to exhume the body of Rameez, after getting the go-ahead from his parents on August 22.

Rukmini Krishnamurthy, former State Forensics Science

WHAT THE FORENSIC COMMITTEE WANTS TO KNOW

- > The medical qualification and expertise of doctors who treated Rehab at both Criti Care and Kokilaben Dhirubhai Ambani Hospital
- > Clinical treatment queries such as when and who collected the stomach wash of Rehab, how it was preserved and who was the custodian of the same until the wash was handed over to the police
- > Why did the doctor or the postmortem requisition form filled at Kokilaben Dhirubhai Ambani Hospital not mention the line of treatment for 'suspected poisoning' in the remark column?
- > How did the homeopath, Dr Aslam Momin, conclude that Rameez died a natural death? The doctor's statement recorded by the police does not mention the relevant details.
- > The police have also been asked to find out from Dr Kshitij Mehta, why he did not inform the police about the demise of Rameez

Laboratory (SFSL) director and chairman Helik advisory, said, "Upon exhumation, there are high chances that the microorganisms inside the soil may not have eaten up the entire soft tissues, and even if no soft tissues are found, the nail, hair and bones will still have poisonous residues, as it is a case of suspected metallic poisoning (aluminum phosphide). It usually deposits on these areas for months even after the body is laid to rest. Also soil samples from the grave will have the

presence of metallic poison." Krishnamurthy also said that it was not possible to conclude if the same was inhaled or consumed. The scientific findings can only confirm the presence of poison in the body at the time of death. The police will have to rely on circumstantial evidence and other scientific methods to join the loose ends to recreate the exact happenings on the fateful night.

Lapse in investigation ?

Former IPS officer turned

lawyer Y P Singh, said, "The police should have followed the provisions of Section 176 Criminal Procedure Code long ago. Any delay in the probe only amounts to weakening of the evidence. The local police have clearly been lax in their duty, which amounts to professional misconduct. A departmental probe should be carried out by a senior officer."

When contacted, Additional Commissioner (West) Region Vishwas Nangre Patil, refused to comment on the issue.