

Pudukai fisherman case: Madras HC suo motu impleads MEA

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Published: 27th November 2021 05:35 AM | Last Updated: 27th November 2021 05:35 AM

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Madras High Court

By Express News Service

MADURAI: The Madurai Bench of Madras High Court on Friday suo motu impleaded the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) and the Consulate General of India (Jaffna) to get response on the guidelines followed to ensure dignity of Indian citizens who die abroad when their mortal remains are brought to India.

Justice GR Swaminathan took the decision when he was informed that the body of Pudukkottai fisherman Rajkiran, which was sent to Tamil Nadu by the Sri Lankan authorities after conducting an autopsy at Jaffna, was left unstitched.

The counsel representing Rajkiran's wife, Brundha, submitted that the body was in a distorted state with the body cavities and the skull, which were cut open for the autopsy by the Lankan authorities, were not sutured.

He referred to a report submitted by an independent forensic expert who was present during the re-postmortem conducted on Rajkiran's body last week. The report said, "The body was left unstitched and the dissected internal organs were kept in a plastic cover and simply placed over the open abdominal cavity. The body was not clothed and was simply wrapped in an old blanket and a plastic cover and placed in the coffin."

According to National Human Rights Commission's (NHRC) advisory, when handing over a body to the family, it must be ensured that the external appearance of the deceased and the incisions on the body must be hidden with clothes. "Handing over a distorted, unstitched and open foreign national body is inhuman and against the dignity of the dead," the report added.

Brundha's counsel argued that the Consulate General had a responsibility to ensure the dignity of the dead fisherman and suggested framing of guidelines to avoid such incidents in future. Hearing the submissions and the report, Justice Swaminathan suo motu added the Ministry of External Affairs and the Consulate General of India (Jaffna) as parties in the case and adjourned the hearing to December 13.