

potentially lead to depriving Indians of essential services. At another level, the proposal to use the 'cheaper' medical facilities of the third world and fund the operation of one 'local' is uncomfortably reminiscent of colonial exploitation and patronage. While the NHS may be 'saved' by these steps, it will certainly endanger health systems in India.

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Custody deaths and post mortem reports

During the monsoon months, Nargol in Umbergaon taluka, Gujarat, is just another a sleepy coastal village. The rest of the year, it bustles with activity, for this region is a rich fishing ground.

So when residents heard of the proposed construction of an industrial port in their taluka, they opposed the plan unanimously. The port would destroy all fishing activity in the region, as the various toxic commodities that ports trade in, were released into the environment. Under the banner of the Kinara Bachao Sangharsh Samiti, the entire village started a peaceful agitation against the port.

On April 7, 2000, port developers came into Umbergaon to conduct a survey. They were accompanied by the State Reserve Police Force. When the people objected to tents being pitched on land belonging to the Baria community, the police launched a brutal lathi charge. Angry villagers squatted on the site of the lathi charge in protest. The police arrested 48 men and women.

The Samiti's president, Lieutenant Colonel (Retired) Pratap Raghunath Save, was arrested after midnight of April 7/8, from his residence. One of the arresting officers was Deputy Superintendent of Police (Dr) Narendra Amin, a qualified surgeon. At the police station, DySP Amin and other policemen brutally beat Colonel Save and five other activists. All the detainees were kept without food or

water, in a lock-up so small that there was no place to sit.

Though in severe pain, Colonel Save had to remain standing all night. The next day, he complained of severe body pain and headache but was given no treatment. When he was taken with other detainees for production before the magistrate, he could barely stand. They were released on bail but immediately re-arrested under different charges and taken to the Umbergaon lock-up. Colonel Save was arrested though he was obviously seriously ill. He was not even given treatment.

Around 11 pm on April 8, Colonel Save fell unconscious. The police shifted him to a local hospital, where records indicate that he was admitted in an unconscious state. This hospital did not have the facilities to treat him, and a little later, he was shifted to a hospital in Vapi.

The police had told Colonel Save's family that he had collapsed due to hypertension. It was much later that the family learned what happened.

A CT scan performed at the next morning diagnosed a subdural haematoma "with mass effect". The doctor told Colonel Save's family that he was seriously ill and needed specialised treatment. They immediately admitted him to Hinduja Hospital in Mumbai, where he underwent emergency brain surgery the same day, and a second operation on April 12. Despite these efforts, Colonel Save did not recover, and died on April 20. His body was sent to LTMG hospital, Sion, for a post-mortem examination.

The Hinduja Hospital gave the

family a narrative summary of the surgery, as well as copies of medical records and test reports. The narrative summary notes that the 'patient was deeply comatose'. The final diagnosis is described as 'acute subdural haematoma complicated by sepsis and multiple organ failure'. Medical records show that Colonel Save had cane marks on his buttocks and thighs and two bruise marks on his chest.

Dr Sunil Pandya, neurosurgeon at Jaslok hospital and former head of the neurosurgery department, KEM Hospital, Mumbai, examined the medical records and concluded that Colonel Save did not die from natural causes. He stated that 'the commonest cause of acute subdural clot is a severe injury to the head'.

The Gujarat government and police are pressurising authorities in Maharashtra not to give the Save family a copy of the post-mortem report. Colonel Save's sons have written to the dean of LMTG Hospital, the police surgeon and the senior police inspector of Mahim Police Station for copies of the PM report but to no avail. This is despite the Bombay High Court judgement that patients and their families have a right to copies of medical records. It is feared that the report will be altered to hide the true cause of death and protect the police.

DySP Amin has acted in violation of his duties as a doctor. Instead of using his skills to save a person, he has caused injury which resulted in that person's death. The Indian Medical Council must initiate an inquiry against him.

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