

Press Release

Visakhapatnam, 30-4-2018

The Human Rights Forum (HRF) demands that the Atchuthapuram police including the Inspector of Police, Yelamanchili not interfere in the investigation of the recent suspicious death of Parupalli Ramanaidu in the Atchuthapuram police station. We also demand that the investigation of the case be handed over to the CB-CID to rule out departmental bias, the possibility of coercing the witnesses and tampering with material evidence by the police.

A three-member HRF team on Sunday (29-4-2018) met Ramanaidu's family members, the Atchuthapuram police, the Inspector of Police, Yelamanchili and visited the Atchuthapuram police station where Ramanaidu allegedly hung himself with a coir rope in the early hours of 25 April 2018. Ramanaidu, a resident of Cheemalapalli village in the Atchuthapuram mandal of Visakhapatnam district was one of the five accused in one Penta Appa Rao's murder case, registered as Crime no. 46/ 2018 in the Atchuthapuram PS. The murder took place on 3 April 2018.

It is the case of the police that Ramanaidu confessed to committing the crime before the Village Revenue Officer (VRO). According to them, Ramanaidu, accompanied by the VRO surrendered himself before the Atchuthapuram police on 24 April 2018. Later in the evening Ramanaidu led the police team headed by KKV Vijaynath, Inspector of Police, Yelamanchili to the scene of offence and showed them the oil can used to burn the body of Appa Rao. Ramanaidu and the other accused had allegedly sprinkled oil and burnt the body of Appa Rao, the deceased person. The police showed the HRF team the video clippings of Ramanaidu reconstructing Appa Rao's murder at the crime scene to the police team led by the Inspector of Police, Yelamanchili on 24 April 2018. Twelve hours later Ramanaidu was found hung in the police station. The police state that Ramanaidu had smuggled the coir rope into the police station and hanged himself in the bathroom.

However, the following questions raise doubts about the suicide theory:

- i. The presence of the remaining four accused in the police station on 24 and 25 April 2018 has not been mentioned in the FIR. While

Ramanaidu's family members stated that the remaining four accused members were also present in the police station on the night of 24 April when they visited the police station, the police are not admitting this.

ii. There is a deliberate move to include a few witness and exclude others. For instance, Ramanaidu's son told our team that a plain clothed policeman picked up Ramanaidu and took him to the station on a two wheeler while the same person stated in the complaint that the VRO took him to the police station. The police stated that they took Ramanaidu to Usha Prime hospital. According to the inquest report, the last person to see Ramanaidu alive and the first person to see him dead is the duty doctor at Usha Prime hospital. The inclusion and exclusion of witnesses by the investigating agency does not seem to be done to gather the best evidence. The inquiry seems to be going in the direction of developing evidence which reinforces the suicide theory instead of finding relevant facts.

iii. An energetic Ramanaidu who allegedly surrenders before police and demonstrates no remorse in reconstructing the murder to the police is suddenly found hanging in the police station washroom in less than twelve hours. The moot question is, if Ramanaidu was touchy about his involvement in Appa Rao's murder case why he did he choose the police station to commit suicide. He could have peacefully ended his life at home. And if Ramanaidu developed the suicidal tendency while he was in the police custody, what prompted him to take such an extreme step?

There are a few procedural infirmities which the investigating personnel ought to have taken into consideration. Also, the NHRC guidelines have not been strictly followed in filing of the autopsy report. The police contention is that this issue is being addressed by the concerned medical officer who conducted the autopsy.

HRF also points out that Section 176 (1-A) of the CrPC mandates that all custodial deaths should be enquired into by a judicial magistrate or metropolitan

magistrate rather than an executive magistrate. We therefore urge the Collector to ensure that a judicial magistrate enquires into Ramanaidu's death.

The family members have a right to receive monetary compensation in custodial deaths. HRF urges the District collector to provide monetary compensation to Ramanaidu's family members.

M Sarat

(HRF Vizag district president)

K Sudha

(HRF AP State general secretary)