

National Security Strategy

Unidentified Dead Bodies and Missing Persons

Death is not the end to the sufferings of human being, especially when the death is sudden and where the family members or friends or relatives have no idea about the whereabouts of the said individual. Thus labelled as UNIDENTIFIED BODY where there is no claimant.

A. Background

2. The official data for Unidentified dead bodies recovered for 2014, 2015 and 2016 on All India basis pegs the figures at 35215, 34592 and 43460 respectively. These are the people for whom their relatives and family members are still looking for, but probably in vain. The missing reports have been filed in some part of the country and the investigation might be ongoing or the final report might have been submitted, leaving the family members on their own, who have limited resources and authority to search or find them. Slowly the hope fades and records are weeded out. Probably if the figures are added up year on year, they will run into lakhs. So these are the people who are missing from one part of the country and died/killed unceremoniously somewhere else in the country, with State even reaching them at the end of their life cycle, but still unable to unite them with their loved ones during their last journey.

3. It is noteworthy that the religious places in India report unusually high incidence of unclaimed bodies.

4. The issue was taken up by Supreme Court wide Writ Petition 163 of 2013 filed by Shri Vikas Chandra Guddu Baba. In pursuance to the Supreme Court's order a committee was constituted under the directions of MHA. Though the mandate of the committee was to make recommendations on the matter of constraints faced by the State Governments in the disposal of unclaimed dead bodies, but the recommendations and constraints listed out by the

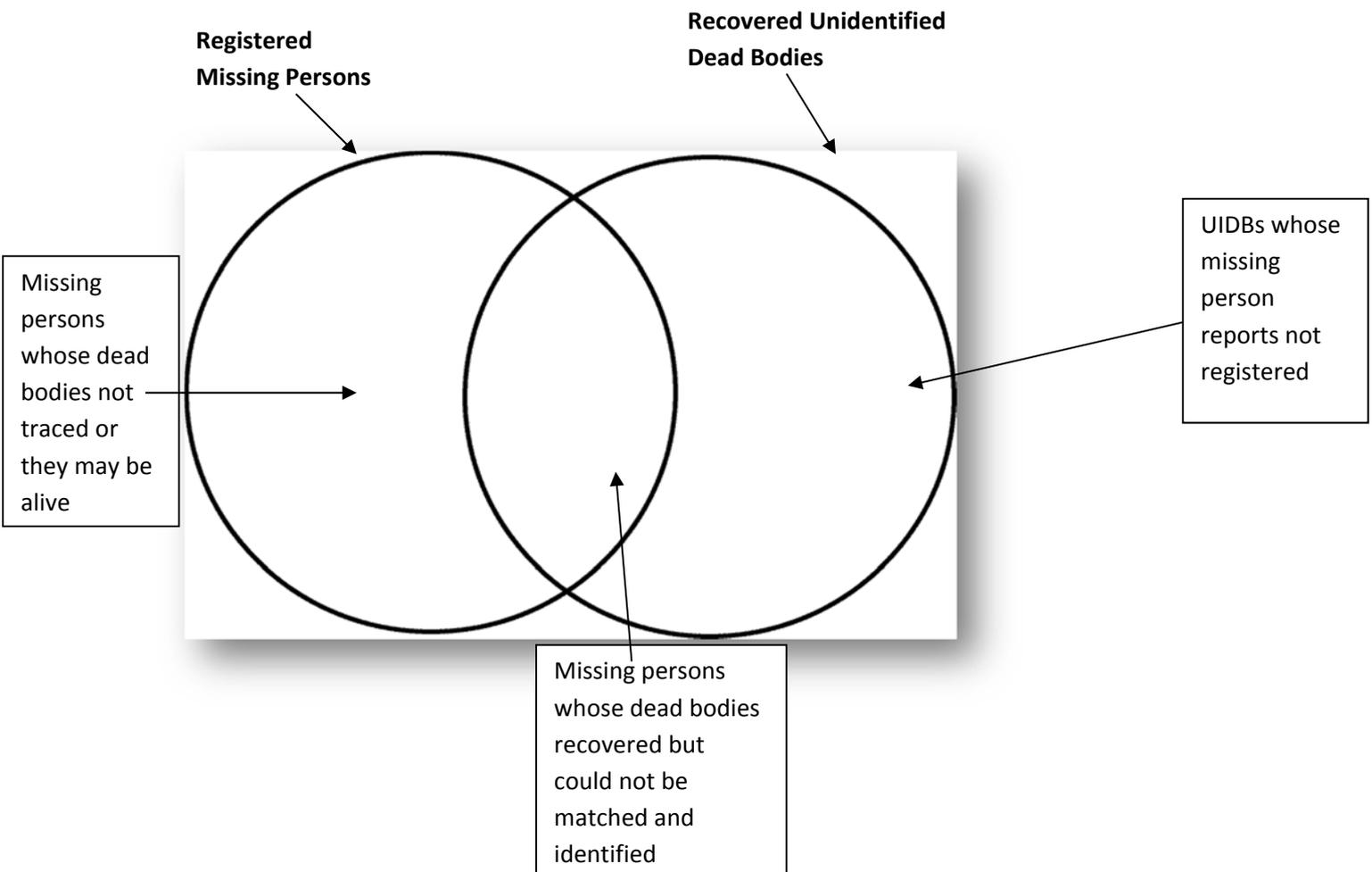
committee are also very relevant to the topic of “**unidentified dead bodies and missing persons**”.

5. The present data indicates that almost **80-90 percent** of the recovered unidentified dead bodies never get identified ultimately. The figure is alarming and clearly indicates that the SOP and procedures being followed are highly inefficient and inadequate. The problem needs a multi-pronged strategies, response & follow up action:

- i. Reviewing the SOP's at Police Station and hospital level,
- ii. Technological up gradation at Police Station, Forensic labs and Primary Health Centres and Hospitals and other intermediate levels,
- iii. Creating Data base of Missing Persons and UCDBs/ UIDBs and providing access to the public
- iv. Police and investigation agencies may be empowered and authorised to have access to Data bases maintained by the various departments' to extract relevant information, which may provide vital clues for identification purpose.
- v. Compulsory capturing vital information and basic parameters during inquest and PM, which offer help in investigation into cases relating to UCDB/UIDBs:
 - a) Biometric Parameters
 - b) DNA fingerprinting,
 - c) Finger-prints,
 - d) Photograph/Close ups of the face,.
 - e) The other parameters from the body which may help in zeroing down identity.

B. Problem at hand

6. The problem of missing persons and recovered UCDBs/ UIDBs can be depicted in the form of Venn-Diagram given blow:



7. Apart from the reported number of missing cases and UIDB there could be cases where no missing report has been filed. At the same time there could be unrecovered bodies of the missing persons. In the later case though technically an option, is not amenable to further any logical recourse except an investigation. But the former case, where the body is recovered but no case is registered is very much amenable to an SOP in this regard.

8. It is a daunting task to identify an unknown dead body in the present time. The local police just do the formality of filling up the inquest report and sending the body for the post mortem. Because of this casual approach, the identification of the unknown dead body becomes difficult. We have no professional photographer and field unit members to collect physical evidence nearby dead bodies. In today circumstances a proper **Standard Operating Procedure (SOP)** is the need of the hour. We may develop mobile mortuary with all modern gadgetry to capture all parameters needed for identification and investigation with facility to automatically push information in national database with minimal manual intervention. We may also strengthen field formations with Mobile Apps to facilitate collection, collation and

assimilation of information in database with effective dissemination to various stakeholders in very user friendly manner using artificial intelligence and other IT tools.

9. Though separate procedures are available in various states to deal with UCDB/UIDB's and also with regard to their disposal, but there is no uniformity in the procedure and collection of basic facts and evidence, which may render help during inquiry or investigation.

10. Similarly for missing persons the Supreme Court has come up with the guidelines **after Nithari Killings** also in Writ petition 75 of 2012 read with contempt petition 186/2013 of Bachpan Bachao Andolan **that a missing report should be converted into a Kidnapping report after certain period has elapsed in case of vulnerable sections of population** (latest guidelines attached-annexure).

C. Tackling the Problem: Concept

11. *It should always be kept in mind that once the process of collecting evidence is over and the unclaimed body is sent for last rites, then there is no second chance to collect or corroborate any findings later.*

- i. Giving Unique ID to recovered UCDBs/ UIDBs as soon as they are recovered on a pan India basis.
- ii. Once the body gets identified and claimed general standard procedure shall come in force for further course of action.
- iii. After a lapse of period on the lines of SC Judgment-**Registration of an FIR** in case of Dead Bodies as well based on evidence.
- iv. Since in case of missing persons it is already mandatory to lodge FIR, but here the online registration with public interface should be ensured under CCTNS.
- v. All possible evidence which can be recovered from the dead body should be compulsorily recovered-An exhaustive list to be made and role of police and health department to be demarcated-Inquest and Post-mortem report formats to be amended accordingly.
- vi. The requisite infrastructure and framework should be created and instruments/applications made to police and health for collection of Quality Data-which is amenable to online comparisons and dissemination to all stake holders. It should enable capturing of their additional inputs and feedback using IT tools.

- vii. Biological samples should be collected by autopsy surgeon for DNA Fingerprinting analysis. Once the samples are received in the said laboratories, the procedure should be carried out as soon as possible and DNA analysis of these biological samples should be carried out before they get damaged. Once DNA is extracted it can be stored for ages together and compared with the biological relatives if found or there is any claimant. DNA data should be uploaded to National Data Repository at the earliest. Thus all DNA laboratories across the country would be integrated through National Data Repository and monitoring system. It would have linkages with missing person's database (it recognizes/picks up the alleles matching with its biological relations) and matching would be done automatically using various parameters including DNA.
- viii. User friendly system for allocation of appointment with Collection centers (Creating specialized but well distributed facilities) for family members to give DNA samples after 15 days of registration (If the person remains untraced).
- ix. The various biological exhibits to be used are :
 - a) Blood in liquid form but better is to make stain of this and dried properly so that it can be stored at RT for indefinite period of time without using any preservative.
 - b) Long bones preferably femur or humerus or even sternum. The tissues may be removed from these and wrapped in blotting sheets before putting them in poly bags.
 - c) Teeth.....the best exhibits which again does not require any preservative. Should be dried and packed in blotting sheet and then stored in plastic container for years together at RT
 - d) Hair roots...after proper drying, can be packed in blotting sheet and then in plastic container. Can be stored at RT for years together

The other biological samples which can be used are soft tissues like brain, uterus in females, kidney or heart. But these samples require preservative as Normal saline and to be stored at lower temperature at 4⁰C. Many a times such facility is not available, thus above mentioned samples can be collected, stored and transported for DNA FP analysis

- x. The sample may be packed and system generated QR code may be attached which may be used for updating records including police record. Properly packaged samples may be sent (by quickest mode including air in properly packaged containers) to concerned laboratory assigned by system on the basis workload of various laboratories. Test reports should be uploaded on national repositories and all concerned may be notified automatically including the police. It would obviate delays and ensure optimal utilization of capacities of testing laboratories. However additional laboratories and augmentation of present laboratory be done on the basis of acceptable waiting period.
- xi. Effective online tools (based on Face Recognition/ other available techniques) for SCRB and DCRB's to compare and search online data such as **Talash Information System** developed by NCRB. However artificial intelligence should be used for automated matching, dissemination to all the stakeholders including parents and other kith & kin. Periodic feedback may be captured from stakeholders through system generated message and link for automated updating of database.
- xii. Effective use of Social Media/ NGOs in an institutional manner.
- xiii. Effective use of print and electronic media not just Doordarshan or Akashvani.

D. Standard Operating Procedures to be followed at Various Levels

12. Establishing the identity of the unknown dead bodies always poses a challenge to the police and to the forensic experts. The Challenge/Constraints faced by police:
- i. Lack of funds/ advance money in time.
 - ii. Fingerprints of all 10 fingers, good photographs are not being captured for future identification and matching.
 - iii. Collection of blood samples and other biological samples are not being carried out religiously for future identification and matching.
 - iv. Lack of equipment (safety gears) and other accessories required for transportation to Post Mortem House.

- v. State Police publishes such cases on their website but is yet to be linked with Crime & Criminal Tracking and Network System (CCTNS) of National Crime Records Bureau Delhi.
- vi. There is no national Database of UCDB & UIDB, where people can see/verify their near and dear ones periodically.
- vii. People are less informed about UCDB & UIDB.
- viii. Lack of publicity and funds are also affecting public awareness.
- ix. Lack of dedicated Police Units/Forensic experts for UCDB & UIDB in District Police hampers the genuine/proper collection of evidence from site of incident.

Identification can be done by matching information from the deceased (physical features, clothes, artefacts and belongings to the dead body etc.) with information from individuals who are missing or presumed dead. Direct comparison of the deceased according to the memory or available photographs, is the primary method of identification but this kind of identification should be supported by some scientific methods, IT tools (including face, body mark and denture recognition techniques), and artificial intelligence should be effectively used for this purpose. DNA FP analysis should also be explored wherever ever possible.

SOP at police station level to deal with unidentified dead bodies.

13. The police are the first to receive information about the dead body. On receiving the information the SHO or the officer in charge present at the police station should immediately (if not going himself then reasons to be recorded in writing and exemption taken from SP) reach the place of incident. The following steps should be taken by the officer in charge when he/she reaches the place of incident.

- Give Unique ID to be dead body as per procedure
- Firstly the area or the site should be secured.
- No unauthorized person should be allowed to come near the place where the body has been found.

- A proper inspection of the site should be thoroughly done and photography should be done from each angle complete face, palm, and legs are visible so that easy identification of the dead body can be done.
- **Photograph of the Face is of utmost importance as far as identification is concerned, this should taken with the help of Application compatible with Software provided in SCRB.**
- **Similarly Photograph should also be taken of Tattoo, Birth mark, any other deformity or crucial feature, which can help in identification**
- The entire body should be thoroughly examined and written about in the inquest report.
- The nature of injuries, if any, needs to be maintained in detail.
- The clothes on the body should be well inspected to recover items like mobile, diary, note, tailor slip.
- The item recovered from the body of the deceased can be an important clue in the identification of the dead body.
- Marks on the body of the deceased like mole, birth mark, old injury, tattoo etc can be clearly mentioned in the inquest report through which the identification of the deceased can be easily done.
- Finger print can be the most helpful medium to identify the unknown dead bodies.
- The thumb impression of all the ten fingers of the deceased must be taken.
- **Use Mobile App for capturing required identification and investigation related parameter of requisite quality. Quality photography and videography may be also be done through App and uploaded to system for dissemination to various stakeholders.**
- In case the body is decomposed the doctor performing the postmortem should be requested to keep the skin of the finger tip special methods and tools may be used for proper capturing of finger prints.
- The doctor performing the postmortem should be requested to collect the DNA sample from the unidentified dead body.
- Use of refrigerated mobile/portable morgue to prevent decomposition of the body during custody and transport.
- Disposal of unclaimed bodies and its cremation shall be duly documented by way issue of death certificate/ cremation/ disposal certification by the concerned authority.

- Checklist for the officer in charge for collection of evidences from the unidentified dead body/site of incident

Details of physical appearance/evidence that should be collected from the body

- Age
- color
- Gender
- Height
- Birth mark
- Any other injury mark
- Tattoo
- Racial features
- Any cut/burn mark
- Broken teeth
- Hair dyed/natural
- Other Items
- Clothing
- Footwear
- Watch
- Glasses
- Any jewelry item
- Hearing aids
- Key/purse/wallet/ticket
- Mobile
- Bank card
- Driving license
- Passport
- Identity card
- Finger print
- Region to which person belongs (also mention why?)

1. Dedicated trained forensic team at each district level needs to be deployed which can reach the scene of incident and collected the requisite details scientifically.

- 2. During Investigation the Investigating Officer should mandatorily mention Unique ID-wise the data of SCRB through which he has tried to make identification. Unique ID may be converted into QR code to be used fast capturing, uploading and dissemination of information to all the stakeholders.**

Check list for doctor at the time of post-mortem:

14. Medical officers must ensure action as per the check list-

- Major injury/scars on the body
- Time since death
- Age from scientific methods (if sample required)
- Distinctive feature of nose eyes ear teeth chin
- Circumcision
- Dental Structure/impressions/procedure
- In case of women details about hysterectomy tummy
- Pregnancy detail
- Dental finding like (crown/implant/denture)
- DNA specimen (bone/teeth/hair/blood/tissue)
- In case of poison or if cause of death is not certain Viscera preservation

15. Above data/ information be captured and uploaded to database using QR codes by the Doctor and the same may be made available to IO through the National Data Base Dissemination System. National Database system may be enabled to identify failures/ lapses/ shortcomings in data capturing and the same be flagged to controlling and disciplinary authorities of concerned medical officers and should be pursued to logical end with inbuilt escalation mechanism. It will help in ensuring better compliance with accountability. Accountability of supervisory medical officers for lapses and failures should also be ensured through the same mechanism.

16. Three very important aspects for identification are estimated age of the deceased, cause of death and time since death. These figures should be given special mention in the P.M. report as they are very essential to filter search parameters. For age of the dead body, a mean age from police inquest report and medical analysis can be taken for searching the database as per the assigned priority.

17. Sample collection kits should be provided to the hospitals as per SOP, along with the infrastructure for storage of such samples. The disposal of unclaimed/unidentified dead body should be after 72 hrs and seven days in case of foreigners.

Sealing, Packaging, Labelling and Transportation of samples, specimens to the centre of examination/ testing:-

18. Sealing, packaging, assigning identity labels (QR code system) should be done at the respective quarters of collection by the concerned officials and should be transported (through fast and standardised system of transportation) to the respective centres for the examination and testing laboratories. Special care should be given to maintain chain of custody. The system should be robust, standardized and free from any manipulation. For this purpose: Blood and other samples are being collected by the centres across the country and being sent to testing laboratories. The similar system may be further developed using QR codes for faster processing enabling fault free uploading of data to the national repository. There is need of strict code for proving chain of custody before the court. If that is accomplished overburdened Police would be relieved of this task without compromising chain of custody. It will provide effective solution for problem being faced in the present system which suffers on account of callous and unscientific attitude of police. Delays, spoilage and disappearance of samples would be totally eliminated.

- i. An email ID and mobile numbers of stakeholders should compulsorily be captured and integrated with QR code of the case for conveying the results of the Laboratory.
- ii. The results of the examination should be uploaded using QR code in national data repository and should be conveyed to all the stakeholders on official mail/mobiles immediately including IO (Police). Test reports and other information may also be accessed and downloaded by the stakeholders as per their authorization.
- iii. Intelligent System should be developed for matching the record, capturing periodic information directly from stakeholders using user friendly link sent through mobile/ email. Inferences of feedback received may be derived using artificial intelligence and conveyed to IO for further investigation purpose. System generated lead for doing necessary investigation may also be conveyed to IO for enabling him to do quality job.
- iv. It is highly recommended that system should have **Face, Denture, identity mark, birth mark and other Recognition Capabilities.**

- v. **Charter of duties and responsibilities of DCRB, SCRБ and NCRB be integrated with the system using powerful IT tools with periodic upgrading the Talash Information System. The system may be further improved to serve higher purpose using artificial intelligence and machine learning tools effectively.**

E. New Technology enabling required to implement above Recommendations:-

- Establishing a National Data Bank/ Repository for DNA and other test results.
- All relevant data/ information be captured and uploaded to the National Data Base System
- E-Inquest System with on spot help through mobile App, to capture all angles of dead bodies which are critical for identification, maybe captured through pr-fixed templates in the App. App should have capability of assessing quality of photographs and guiding IO on real time basis to capture good quality and readable photographs. Fingerprints and iris of UIBDs/ UCBDs should also be uploaded in the system/ national data system on real time basis.
- State of the art modern mortuary with freezers, security and accountability features should be set up sub divisional level under over all control and supervision of state forensic medicine advisor in the home department.
- We may consider having mobile mortuaries with modern facilities for conducting PM and capturing necessary identity parameters and vital evidence.
- A well equipped vehicle with portable and refrigerated morgue should be available for transportation of dead bodies from scene of occurrence to mortuary.
- Development and use of specially designed robots with the assistance of DRDO/ CSIR to perform certain tasks that will help to contain infections from the dead bodies to the handlers may also be considered.
- Disposal of the dead body after completion of autopsy related formalities by way of cremation and burial etc being primarily a municipal function should be discharged by the Municipality/ Local Self Government functionaries. Body shall however be not disposed and kept in freezer of mortuary before

expiry of period fixed by State Government (preferably 72 hours). During which effort shall be made to ascertain identity and next of kin to extent possible.

- Advance Powerful System for comparison/ matching and dissemination of relevant information to stakeholders with necessary investigative leads may be developed and artificial intelligence, machine learning and other IT tools should be effectively used to the best advantage. SMS/Email based link may be sent for capturing periodic additional information and feedback from stakeholders, which might have come to their notice.
- Photographs and other details of UIDBs/ UCDBs with matching/ similar parameters may be sent to the concerned victim's family members/ IOs on their mobile numbers/ Email ID as soon new records are uploaded in the repository.
- National Database/ Repository should also be integrated with CCTNS for better coordination.
- Collection/ Facilitation Centers network be developed for user friendly collection, packaging, sealing and transportation of samples of family members after lapse of predefined period.
- Aadhar Database access and enabling be done to establish identity of the Dead body on real-time basis
- Election Commission data should also be used for establishing identity using Face recognition techniques and other advance IT tools.
- National Database system may be enabled to identify failures/ lapses/ shortcomings, the same be flagged to controlling and disciplinary authorities and should be pursued to logical end with inbuilt escalation mechanism. It will help in ensuring better compliance with accountability. Accountability of supervisory officers for lapses and failures should also be ensured through the same mechanism.

19. There are many pathological labs collecting, sealing, packaging and transporting samples using fastest means and test reports are uploaded and made available to clients using various modes including on line web based system. Government can certainly develop elaborate system for collection of samples with proper sealing, packaging and transportation system and may be sent to testing laboratory based on various managerial considerations. Due care about chain of custody be maintained and tempering free arrangement needs to be

developed. It will reduce the burden of police and much more transparent, accountable and efficient system should be developed with proper chain of custody. Any lapse, mistake or laxity has to be handled ruthlessly, efficiently and effectively.

1. Sh. Maithili Sharan Gupta, Spl. DG, MP- Group Leader
2. Dr. Paresh Saxena, IG, Home Guards & Fire Services, Bihar
3. Sh. Barinderjit Singh, SP, Security, Uttarakhand
4. Sh. Nitin Tiwari, SP, SRP, UP
5. Dr. Rajiv Kumar Verma, Sr. Commandant, 6th Bn, RPF
6. Sh. Georgy George, SP, Rail, Chennai, TN
7. Dr. Anupama Raina, Scientist, AIIMS, New Delhi
8. Prof. Sanjeev Lalwani, AIIMS, New Delhi
9. Dr. Neeraj Gupta, CMO, SDMC, New Delhi
10. Dr. R.N. Prasad, CMO, SDMC, New Delhi