

India hands over Pakistani prisoner's body

The body of Mohammed Akram, a Pakistani undergoing trial in an Amritsar court for illegally crossing over into Indian territory, was Saturday handed over to Pakistani authorities at the Attari-Wagah joint border check post.

Akram, 34, died in a government hospital in Amritsar April 26 following illness. His body was handed over by Border Security Force (BSF) officials to their Pakistani counterparts.

His brother, Muhammad Aslam, confirmed the body was of his brother who had crossed into India by mistake near Kasur in February this year. Akram was suffering from acute schizophrenia.

After Aslam identified the body, it was taken to a hospital in Lahore for post-mortem examination.

Aslam said he and his family members had taken him to a mazaar, or shrine, in Kasur where he was separated from them. A few days later he was found near Amritsar, and arrested by Indian police. It was not yet clear how he managed to cross the border.

Aslam added they had placed several ads in newspapers to trace their brother but no one contacted them.

He said his brother 'was tortured to death by the Indian authorities. I have seen marks on his face'.

A resident of Faisalabad city in Pakistan, Akram was apprehended by the Punjab police at Valtoha in February this year. He did not have valid travel documents.

Police officials said Akram fell ill in March and was admitted to hospital. His condition deteriorated gradually and he died a natural death. They said Akram was suffering from pneumonia which later led to septicemia.

They said the post-mortem, conducted after clearance from Pakistan high commission authorities, did not reveal anything unusual in his death.

Aslam said they had been informed the body would reach the border check post at 10 a.m. but it was delayed and reached there only at 2.15 p.m. Pakistan time.

Deputy Commissioner of Police K.S. Pannu said Akram's body took a long time to be handed over as a long procedure had to be followed through the central government and Pakistani authorities.

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