

News

DNA testing on the remains of an Indian seafarer killed in a conflict in West Asia is ordered by the Bombay High Court.



In an effort to help a bereaved family find closure, the Bombay High Court on Tuesday ordered the Deputy Director General (DDG) of Shipping to supervise the gathering and DNA testing of a 25-year-old Indian seafarer's burnt remains. A drone boat carrying explosives attacked an oil tanker off the coast of Oman earlier this month, killing Dixit Solanki.

The remains must be gathered in front of the family members and taken to the Forensic Science Laboratory (FSL) in Mumbai, according to an order from a division bench that included Chief Justice Shree Chandrashekhar and Justice Gautam Ankhad. The court intervened in response to a petition filed by Solanki's father and sister, who sought legal action after being presented with only charred remains that needed to be scientifically identified before funeral ceremonies could be carried out.

The case began on March 1 when an explosive-laden drone boat attacked the oil tanker MT MKD Vyom while it was cruising off the coast of Oman. On March 4, 25-year-old crew member Dixit Solanki passed away from his wounds.

The conflict in West Asia is said to have escalated significantly after a coordinated military action on February 28. It is thought that Solanki was the first Indian to die during this particular stage of the war.

Last Monday, the High Court received a motion from the victim's sister, Mitali, and father, Amratlal Solanki. Claiming that official responses were unclear, they first asked the Union administration for instructions on how to return his remains home. Despite the fact that the remains arrived in India on Sunday, the family requested a formal DNA test to verify certain identification due to the remains' state, which consisted solely of burned bones.

Advocate Rui Rodrigues, who represented the Union government and maritime authorities during the hearing, told the bench that in order to coordinate the process, the Directorate General of Shipping had already started contacting the Mumbai Commissioner of Police, the Maharashtra Director General of Police, and forensic labs in Hyderabad and Mumbai.

In her representation of the Solanki family, attorney Pradnya Talekar asked the court to impose a stringent timeline for turning in the DNA analysis findings. The bench, however, refused to set a deadline at this point, preferring to concentrate on the prompt logistical transfer of the remains to the specialists.

The "**fundamental right to dignity extends to a person even after death**," according to the Solankis' plea. The family contended that authorities had a legal and constitutional obligation to guarantee the prompt and respectable return of a citizen's remains. They also referenced repatriation standards and international marine legislation that require particular procedures for maritime fatalities.

The bench's order required:

- The mortal remains must be picked up by DDG Shipping while the family is present.
- For DNA analysis, the remains must be sent expressly to the FSL in Mumbai.
- The family must receive a copy of the completed DNA report directly.

For the family to carry out the final rituals in accordance with their customs, identification is a crucial need.