

Health activist Amit Sengupta drowns

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

Margao/New Delhi: Plans of celebrating their wedding anniversary on Wednesday in a picturesque beach locale of Goa turned tragic for a Delhi-based couple, as 60-year-old **Dr Amit Sengupta** drowned in the waters off the Betalbatim beach on Wednesday afternoon.



Sengupta was one of the best-known public health activists in India, and was associated with several social movements in the country and across the globe. He had taken up issues of public health and medicines policy, innovation and intellectual property rights, and science and society over the past three-and-a-half decades.

The Colva police have booked the case as unnatural death and the body has been preserved in South Goa district hospital, Hospicio's morgue in Margao for conducting post-mortem.

Police said the Senguptas had arrived in Goa on Tuesday and had checked into a hotel in Betalbatim. "It was their wedding anniversary today (Wednesday). And they had come to Goa to celebrate it," a police officer said. The incident occurred around 1.30pm.

Police said that Sengupta was bathing in the water, and when a lifeguard noticed him lying still, he rushed to the spot and brought him to the shore. As efforts to revive him didn't succeed, he was rushed to Hospicio in a lifeguard jeep.

Drishti officials told **TOI** that they made all efforts to re-

vive the victim even in the jeep "with AED (automated external defibrillator) connected to the victim and CPR continued, but he was declared dead at Hospicio". Academics, colleagues from the public health movement and civil society groups from across the country expressed shock and disbelief on receiving the news. They said his sudden demise was a huge blow to progressive health movement in India and that his dynamic and far-sighted contribution to people-centric healthcare was irreplaceable.

The cause of his death will be known once the postmortem is conducted on Thursday. However, the incident has brought to the fore the severe frailties in the forensic department of Hospicio.

"Hospicio doesn't have a forensic surgeon. The lone sur-

geon conducting autopsies at Hospicio comes from Goa Medical College and Hospital, Bambolim, every day. With Goa being a popular beach destination and too many drowning deaths occurring here, it's imperative that the forensic department in Hospicio is headed by a full-time forensic surgeon," Dr Venkatesh Hegde, president of the Hospicio's visiting committee, told **TOI**.

Sengupta, who completed MBBS from Maulana Azad Medical College, went on to be a part of the Delhi Science Forum, a public interest organisation working on science and technology policy issues and the Centre for Technology and Development, a non-profit organisation working in the field of sustainable rural development through science and technology applications.

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