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## Legal Spotlight on Bihar Police Encounter in Gopal Khemka Case

July 25, 2025

– Categories: Human Rights



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The recent killing of Vikas, alias Raja, a suspect in the high-profile murder of industrialist Gopal Khemka, has placed the Bihar Police under legal scrutiny, raising questions about procedural conduct during police encounters and the broader implications for law enforcement in India.

On July 29, 2025, at approximately 2:45 AM, a joint team of the Bihar Police and the Special Task Force (STF) located Vikas near Pir Damariya Ghat in Patna. According to official statements from the Malsalami Police Station, Vikas attempted to flee and opened fire on the approaching officers. The police responded with retaliatory gunfire, leading to his death. Authorities reported recovering a pistol, one empty cartridge, and a live round from the scene. No police personnel were injured during the exchange. The body of the deceased was transported to a government hospital for a post-mortem examination.

Vikas, 29, was believed to have supplied the weapon used in the murder of Gopal Khemka earlier this month. Khemka, a well-known figure in Patna's business sector, was fatally shot outside his residence near Gandhi Maidan on July 4, 2025, at around 11:40 PM. The murder occurred just as he returned home from an evening at the Bankipore Club. This shocking incident came seven years after his son, Gunjan Khemka, was murdered in Hajipur in 2018, adding further public attention and urgency to the investigation.

Following Khemka's murder, Bihar Chief Minister Nitish Kumar convened a high-level meeting to review the state's law and order situation. A Special Investigation Team (SIT) led by Superintendent of Police (SP) City Central Diksha was immediately formed. The investigation swiftly led to the arrest of Umesh Yadav, the alleged shooter, by a joint force comprising the STF and Patna Police. Another suspect, Ashok Sao, a known iron trader, was taken into custody on suspicion of orchestrating the murder. Authorities allege that Sao may have paid ₹1 million (roughly \$12,000) to have Khemka killed, potentially motivated by longstanding business disputes. Investigators are also probing possible ties to another businessman currently held in Beur Jail.

Though police officials maintain that the encounter with Vikas was a lawful act of self-defense, human rights observers have called for strict adherence to established protocols. Under Indian law, police encounters that result in death must be independently investigated. The National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) guidelines, intended to prevent abuse of power, require that a First Information Report (FIR) be filed, an autopsy be conducted with video documentation, and a judicial inquiry be initiated without delay.

The encounter has reignited the broader debate over police accountability and the balance between maintaining public order and upholding individual rights. While many support strong action against criminal elements, critics stress the need for transparency to ensure that law enforcement remains within the bounds of the law.

As investigations continue, public attention remains focused on how the state government and police agencies handle both the original murder case and the circumstances surrounding the death of Vikas. The rule of law, many argue, must be maintained not only in courtrooms but also in every action taken in the name of justice.