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Odisha Man Killed, Buried Over Witchcraft Suspicion; Eight Detained

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In a disturbing incident in Odisha's Gajapati district, a man was allegedly killed and buried in a forest by villagers who suspected him of practicing witchcraft. Police have detained eight individuals in connection with the case.

The victim, Karunakar Dalai, a tribal resident known for offering alternative treatments, went missing on July 28 after being called to an anganwadi centre in Kusumpur village under the

pretext of a meeting. His family reported his disappearance to the Mohana police on August 7.

An investigation was launched, and police later recovered Karunakar's body from a hillock near the village. The remains were exhumed in the presence of a magistrate and sent for post-mortem.

According to police sources, Karunakar had recently treated a child who was bitten by a dog using herbal remedies. The child later died, prompting some villagers to blame Karunakar and suspect him of witchcraft. Investigators believe 10 to 12 villagers conspired in the killing, reportedly beating him to death and burying his body four kilometres from the village.

So far, eight suspects have been detained for questioning. Police say efforts are ongoing to locate others involved. This is the second reported witchcraft-related killing in the region this year.

In a previous case, another man accused of witchcraft was strangled, mutilated, and his body dumped in a nearby dam. These incidents reflect persistent superstitions and acts of mob justice in certain tribal communities.

Official records show that Odisha has seen over 550 witchcraft-related killings between 2015 and 2024. Despite legislation aimed at curbing such crimes, activists argue that stronger enforcement and community education are necessary.

Police have reaffirmed their commitment to justice and have urged the public not to resort to violence or vigilante action.