Unclaimed body of Indian prisoner rots in morgue

By Shahnawaz Khan

LAHORE: The body of an Indian national has been in the city morgue for three months and has begun decomposing because the Indian consulate has been unwilling to claim it.

Gopal Singh was arrested a few years ago at the border at Ganda Singh Wala for trespassing without travel documents. He was imprisoned in Kot Lakhpat Central Jail and died there of tuberculosis on

October 28 last year.

Kot Lakhpat Station
House Officer Syed Akhtar
Abbas told Daily Times the
police had written to the
Indian consulate in November
to inform them the body of an
Indian national was in the
morgue and should be picked
up. "We sent them reminders
as well, but they still haven't
responded," Mr Abbas said.

He said Mr Singh could not be given a proper funeral until the Indian authorities gave writ-

ten approval.

Sources in the Prisons Department said this wasn't the first time the body of a foreign prisoner had been left to rot in the mortuary.

A Nigerian man arrested for drug smuggling died in Kot Lakhpat jail in 1997. The Nigerian consulate did not take the body and it rotted in the morgue, the sources said. In 2001, an Indian Muslim died in Kot Lakhpat jail. His body was not claimed by the Indian consulate either, the sources said.

According to the sources, there are 113 foreigners, including 75 Indians, serving time in the overcrowded Kot Lakhpat jail. Jail Superintendent Mian

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Salik Jalil said they are kept in cubicles separate from Pakistani prisoners.

"Most of them were arrested for smuggling drugs or traveling on fake documents or without documents, particularly the Indians. Many have completed their sentences but are unable to pay their fines. But none of them have received a word from their consulates," Mr Jalil said.

Asked what happened to these prisoners when their sentences were over, Mr Jalil said, "Once their sentences are over, they are free to return to their homelands with the help of their consulates. We have to release the non-Indian nationals and they continue to live in Pakistan, illegally, but we can't do anything about that. Our job ends when their sentence is over," he said.