

Headline **Murder of Vet Dept official solved**
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'Murder of Vet Dept official solved'

Jaspal Singh

IPOH: Police believe they have solved the murder of Perak Veterinary Department deputy director Dr Rohani Kassim, with the arrest of four suspects less than 24 hours after the incident.

All four suspects, aged between 20 and 26, were believed to be Dr Rohani's neighbours at Permai Lakeview Apartment here.

One of the suspects was a soldier who had gone AWOL (absent without official leave), while another was a postman.

The other two were jobless, with one of them wanted by police in connection with an alleged rape case in Slim River last year.

Perak deputy police chief Datuk Zakaria Yusof said two of the suspects were nabbed at 4am on Thursday at the apartment, another in Tanjung Malim and the last suspect in Slim River.

"We also recovered several items, including a handphone and jewellery, which we believe are connected to this case," Zakaria said in a three-page statement distributed at a media briefing in his office here yesterday.

Police believed the motive for the murder was robbery although Zakaria declined to comment when asked if Dr Rohani, 38, was sexually assaulted.

It is, however, learnt that the Forensics Department had sent vaginal swabs to the state Chemistry Department to determine if the victim had been raped.

"With the arrest of the four suspects, police have successfully concluded their investigations," Zakaria

said.

The investigations revealed that Dr Rohani was strangled and there were no signs of forced entry into her rented unit.

According to the victim's neighbours, there were four young men who lived across Dr Rohani's unit.

One of the neighbours, who spoke on condition of anonymity, said the victim lived in a unit about 5m from the four men's unit.

He added that the men had rented the unit not too long ago and were often seen loitering near the stairway.

"Several of their friends used to occupy the unit which Dr Rohani had rented.

"Some of us saw police arresting two of the four men on the morning Dr Rohani's body was found on the landing of the stairway.

"We also learnt from a security guard that two other men had fled the scene."

Dr Rohani, who was promoted to deputy director in charge of veterinary health effective July 1, was found dead at 3.30am on Thursday.

Her body, bundled in a thick comforter, was dumped by her assailants on the stairway near her unit.

Another neighbour said she last saw Dr Rohani returning to her unit at 6pm on Wednesday.

She added that Dr Rohani was carrying plastic bags containing what looked like food packets.

"We exchanged greetings and I asked her about the break-in at her unit, where she reportedly lost RM15,000 worth of jewellery."

Dr Rohani's family, with the help of staff members from the Perak Veterinary Department, yesterday re-

moved some of her belongings to their home in Parit Haji Ali, Bagan Serai.

Dr Rohani's elder brother, Ahsan Kasim, said his sister had changed the padlocks to her door after the break-in.

In **Kuala Lumpur**, Women, Family and Community Development Minister Datuk Seri Shahrizat Abdul Jalil expressed concern that apathy and a lack of neighbourliness might have resulted in criminals becoming bolder.

"Crimes are no longer concentrated in remote or rural areas. They are being committed in apartment units, where victims are in close vicinity of neighbours and the community," she said.

"Does this mean that we no longer care about what happens to our neighbours?"

Shahrizat was speaking after presenting RM2.8 million in funds to 19 HIV/AIDS shelter homes under the Malaysian Aids Council and eight Pengasih homes, at Rumah Pengasih in Bukit Tunku here yesterday.

Shahrizat advised women to be vigilant and called on the public to be more aware of what was happening in their neighbourhood.

"I urge every member of the community to look out for each other.

"The police and relevant enforcement agencies will take the appropriate action but the public and family members must play their roles, too."

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The four suspects arrested in connection with the murder of Perak Veterinary Department deputy director Dr Rohani Kassim being escorted to the Ipoh magistrate's court yesterday. — NST picture by Muhaizan Yahya