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Probe Opened Into Death of Russian Tycoon During Indian Holiday

By AFP

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Pavel Antov **vladtv.ru**

Indian police are investigating the sudden deaths of a wealthy Russian politician who reportedly criticized the war in Ukraine and his traveling companion at a luxury hotel, authorities said on Tuesday.

The body of Pavel Antov, 65, was found on Saturday in a pool of blood outside his lodgings in eastern Odisha state, where he was on holiday with three other Russian nationals.

His death came two days after another member of his party, Vladimir Bidenov, was found unconscious at the same hotel after suffering an apparent heart attack and could not be revived.

Police said they were reviewing CCTV footage, questioning hotel staff and waiting for detailed autopsy reports, but had so far not seen any signs of foul play.

"All possible angles as regards the deaths of two Russian nationals are being verified," regional police chief Rajesh Pandit told AFP.

Bidenov's heart attack had likely been caused by binge drinking and a possible drug overdose, he said.

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"So far it seems that Antov accidentally fell from the hotel terrace," he added.

"He was probably disturbed by the death of his friend and went to the hotel terrace and likely fell to his death from there."

The officer said Antov and his friends had arrived in the state in mid-December and visited several locations before arriving at their hotel in Rayagada at the start of last week.

Two local travel agents accompanying the party had also been questioned, along with the other two Russian members of the holiday group.

Antov served as a deputy in the Vladimir region's local parliament since 2018, where he represented President Vladimir Putin's United Russia party.

Before entering politics, Antov had made a fortune with his Vladimirsky Standart meat company and was ranked the richest parliamentarian in the country by the Russian edition of Forbes magazine in 2019.

In June, Russian media published a WhatsApp message attributed to Antov that described a Kremlin missile attack on Ukraine as "terrorism," prompting Antov to deny writing the message and insisting that he supported Russia's "special military operation" on Russian social media network VK.

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