2 commit suicide in Bengal over fear of contracting coronavirus

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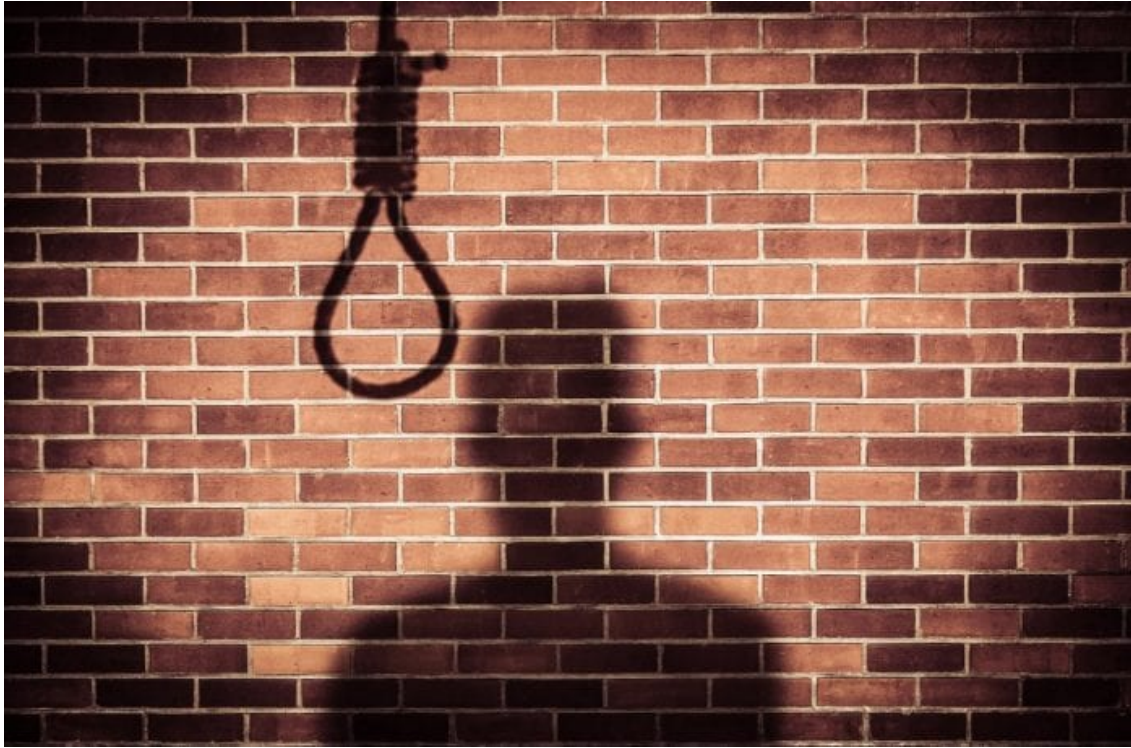
Samir K Purkayastha
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Amid the coronavirus outbreak already claiming lives across the country, in the past 24 hours, two persons committed suicide in the past 24 hours in different parts of West Bengal, allegedly due to the COVID-19 scare infused depression.

In another incident, the cremation of a suicide victim was halted for a few hours on Thursday as it was rumoured that the man died of COVID-19 infection.

Premnath Bauri (45) of Ukhra village in West Burdwan district was suffering from fever since last Monday (March 23). On Friday morning his body was found hanging from the ceiling of a room in his house. Family members claimed Bauri was depressed as he feared of having contacted the coronavirus.

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The police, however, were not willing to immediately link the incident with corona scare as Bauri, who had long been separated from his wife, allegedly did not have a happy family life and was also living in an abject poverty with his three daughters.

But one of his relatives, Sumanta Bauri told *The Federal* during a telephonic conversation that the man took the extreme step fearing that the "deadly disease" would devastate his family.

Bauri, a daily-wage earner, could not go out to work since Monday due to the fever. After getting information about his ailment, a police and health team on Tuesday advised him home quarantine for 14 days.

Sumanta said apart from fever the victim had no other symptom of coronavirus and that at the local health centre he was diagnosed with "common flu."

"We are trying to ascertain why the man had taken the extreme step even after being told at the health centre that he was suffering from simple fever," SDO (Durgapur) Anirban Koley told local reporters.

The body was sent for post-mortem.

A similar claim was also made by family members of Sujit Biswas of Dogachi village in Nadia district after his hanging body was recovered on Thursday evening.

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Sujit, a migrant worker, had returned to his village last week in the wake of exodus triggered by the coronavirus pandemic.

His brother Pradip told reporters that as he fell sick soon after his return, a team of health workers visited him on Thursday afternoon and urged him to be on home quarantine.

"After purchasing hand wash and a soap for him, I had also in the afternoon told him to remain in isolation. But in the evening we found him hanging in the room," Pradip was quoted as saying by a local daily.

Police said they were looking into the coronavirus connection to the death.

Cremation of Akhay Raul of Ghatua village in East Midnapore district was disrupted on Thursday evening after rumours were spread in the area that the 23-year-old man died of Covid-19.

Raul, who used to work at a private company in Pune, committed suicide recently. After his body was brought to the village on Thursday early morning, some spread the rumour that he died after contacting coronavirus.

According to police the body could be cremated only late in the evening after their intervention.

Similar public hostility was witnessed during the cremation of the state's first COVID-19 casualty, a 57-year-old resident of Dumdum in Kolkata on Monday, prompting the municipal corporation to reserve two burial grounds and a crematorium now for last rites of coronavirus victims in the city.

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