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DELHI

## Destitute man dies a week after being rescued

**Shinjini Ghosh**

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**Social worker had spotted him, informed authorities who sent him to hospital**

A week after being rescued from near Kashmere Gate, a destitute man died at a city hospital on Thursday, said Sunil Kumar Aledia, a social worker who had rescued him on April 15.

*The Hindu* had earlier reported how Mr. Aledia had spotted the man, identified as Manoj, near Kudesia Ghat and informed authorities who then shifted the person to Rajan Babu TB Hospital.

On Saturday, Mr. Aledia said that after tracing the man's family to Bihar and arranging for a caretaker, when he reached the hospital, he was informed that Manoj had died. Hailing from a family of *dhobis* in Bihar, Mr. Manoj had come to the city over two decades ago, added Mr. Aledia.

"Usually there are no caretakers for destitutes in hospitals and therefore, the authorities had asked us to arrange one. We did so and when we visited the hospital we found an empty bed. Those on adjacent beds recognised us as we had been visiting Manoj often. They told us that he had died soon after our visit on Thursday," said Mr. Aledia, convenor of the National Forum For Homeless Housing Rights.

When Mr. Aledia first spotted Manoj near Kudesia Ghat last week, he had mistaken him for a body. It was only after inching closer that he realised that the person was breathing, but very lightly.

"*Paani* [water] is all that he managed to utter and then kept repeating," Mr. Aledia said while recounting the story behind a photo taken by him which had gone viral on social media.

Stating that according to doctors, Manoj had been suffering from TB, Mr. Aledia said, "That entire stretch along the Yamuna has become a TB hotspot. Adequate medicines are not being delivered there and people there are severely malnourished. Several other instances have also taken place where the homeless have succumbed to the disease [TB]."

On the same day, when Mr. Manoj was rescued, hundreds of migrant workers who had been stationed at the Kudesia Ghat due to the lockdown, were shifted to shelter homes by the State government after the issue was brought to light through media reports.

Stating that several representations had been made to the government pertaining to these workers, Mr. Aledia also said, "The people who have been living here for the last 10-15 days have had no access to proper sanitation and could not even take a bath. There is a high possibility that they are suffering from other communicable diseases as well. Proper medical check-ups should be done before they are made to stay with hundreds of others in shelters."

## A letter from the Editor

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