



India

Coronavirus lockdown: Migrant dies on walk home

Vilas had covered around 250km when he suddenly crumbled on the road to Patna

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Migrants walk towards their native places amid the lockdown in Allahabad on Saturday.

Telegraph file picture

A 40-year-old road construction worker, who had left his native Bihar to make a living in Allahabad, collapsed on the road on Wednesday and died while walking back to his village nearly 400km away.

Vilas Mahto had set out from Allahabad last Friday, two days after the nationwide Covid-19 lockdown began on March 25, leaving him and his brother-in-law Mishri Mahto, a fellow road construction worker, without a job.

Vilas had covered around 250km when he suddenly crumbled on the road to Patna in Dehri-on-Sone in Bihar's Rohtas district.

Dehri station house officer (SHO) Subodh Kumar said Vilas died on Wednesday. "They were labourers returning from Allahabad and one of them died. We took the body to Sadar Hospital at Sasaram for the post-mortem and have put the incident in our records," Kumar told The Telegraph on Thursday. "Both were poor people and were trying to return (to their village) somehow."

K.N. Tiwary, deputy superintendent, Sasaram Sadar Hospital, said prima facie it appears Vilas died of a heart attack.

Vilas's death captures the plight of thousands of migrant workers forced into an unprepared exodus by the sudden lockdown.

Figures put out by the Bihar government say around 1.81 lakh such migrant workers returned to the state till March 31 and have been quarantined. Sources said an equal number may have dodged the checkpoints and gone straight to their homes.

Vilas's brother-in-law Mishri said they had started on March 27 for their village at Bhagwanpur in Vaishali, via NH-2. The plan was to enter Bihar's Rohtas district and take the state highway to Patna, from where their village was just around 40km away.

"We would walk, eat, rest and walk again. For food, we had chura-gur and sattu mixed with water. We also managed to get food in villages close to the highway. A couple of times we also got rides for short distances on trucks that were moving to different places in Uttar Pradesh," Mishri said.

On Wednesday, Vilas said he had pain in his stomach, but both kept walking. He collapsed soon after they left NH-2 near Dehri and had taken the road to Patna.

"He (Vilas) writhed in pain for some time and became still. I couldn't understand what was happening. I screamed for help, but there was nobody nearby. I pulled him under a shade beneath a tree and wept. A few people came up and said he was dead. Later the police came," Mishri said.

Late on Wednesday night, after the post-mortem, Vilas's body was handed over to his companion. A vehicle was arranged to take the body to his village.

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