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COVID-19 Lockdown: Bihar Tea-seller Ends Life, Family Alleges Financial Crunch

(/COVID-19-lockdown-bihar-tea-seller-ends-life-family-alleges-financial-crunch)

Even though his family said that there was no food in the house, the district administration refused to acknowledge the lack of ration as a cause for death.

[Mohd. Imran Khan \(/author/Mohd. Imran Khan\)](/author/Mohd.Imran.Khan) 13 Apr 2020



(<https://www.newsclick.in/sites/default/files/2020-04/corona3.jpeg>)

Representational Image. Image Courtesy: PTI

Patna: A middle-aged *chaiwalla* (tea-seller) in Bihar, who was facing financial crunch after his road side tea shop was shut during lockdown, has allegedly committed suicide by hanging from a ceiling fan. This is first such case reported during lockdown in Bihar.

Mahesh Ram, 45, a resident of ward no 32 under Kawaiya Police Station in Lakhisarai district, allegedly ended his life two days ago as he was depressed after his tea shop was shut. He was under tremendous pressure to manage his family of nine members after losing his only source of livelihood.

The father of seven children used to run a tea shop at Pasia tola near Chowk in Lakhisarai. His wife told local police officials that he committed suicide after failing to manage food for his family.

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"His shop was the only source of income and his livelihood. With lockdown, he was forced to shut this shop and his daily earning came to an end. Ram was certainly facing financial crunch and was mentally disturbed for the last ten days, there is no doubt about it," Neeraj Kumar, son of a local ward member, said.

Shankar (name changed), a neighbour of Ram, said that his family was facing a starvation-like situation due to the lack of daily earning since the lockdown. "One can understand the situation of Ram's family. No food was cooked on last Friday, a day before he committed suicide. He was helpless after he failed to manage food items to cook. He appeared very restless on Friday night and reportedly ended his life soon," Shankar said.

Another neighbour Kamlesh (name changed) said Ram was in deep trouble as he wasn't able to earn a single penny. His family members had requested money to buy essential items from Kamlesh but he had nothing to offer them which had led to a dispute within the family.

Lakhisarai district administration are busy in downplaying the incident, saying he and his family

members were not facing starvation. "There may be several reasons behind Ram committing suicide. He did not die of starvation. His death was not connected to hunger or starvation during lockdown. Whether he was facing financial crunch or under mental stress after his tea shop was shut during lockdown, everything will be clear once I get an inquiry report in this case. Today (April 13), I will get an enquiry report and then I will say the exact cause that was behind his suicide," Lakhisarai District Magistrate Shobhendra Choudhary told NewsClick on Monday.

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But Choudhary admitted that poor people including all those having small businesses or working to earn daily have been hit during lockdown. But, he added that the government is helping them.

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Kawaiya PS officer in-charge SHO Rajeev Kumar said it is not possible for him to say anything in this regard as Ram's postmortem report has not come yet. He also said that the Sub Divisional Officer and Sub-divisional Police Officer would be more competent authorities to comment on the matter. However, he refused to say anything on being questioned about the body being recovered by the police station under his charge.

Meanwhile, sadar SDO Murli Prasad Singh has denied that Ram committed suicide due to lack of food grains in his house. "He ended his life after heated exchange of words over some dispute with his son. This factor has come to our notice but not certain about it. Prima facie it appears that Ram had committed suicide owing to a family dispute," he said.

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Singh said Ram was an Antyodaya card holder and received 35 kg food grains in March from the local PDS shop. "We have provided food grains including rice, pulses, flour, potato to the Ram's family," he told NewsClick.

According to the local police, DM Choudhary has directed SDI Singh and DSP Ranja Kumar to conduct an enquiry and submit the report in this regard.

Reportedly, hundreds of thousands of poor people are yet to get free rations, as announced by the Chief Minister Nitish Kumar 20 days ago when the lockdown was announced by him. The Bihar government had imposed lockdown from March 22 midnight, a day ahead of the 21 day countrywide lockdown to combat COVID 19 was announced by Prime Minister Modi.


Fear of hunger and uncertainty among the poor are growing in the state as reports pour from across the state. The likely beneficiaries of the relief package announced by the government are already facing hardship, as they have no source of livelihood as everything is shut now.

As per the government's announcement, all ration card holders would be provided free food grains, including 5 kg rice and 1 kg pulses for the next three months in view of lockdown.




However, reportedly a major chunk of the ration card holders are yet to receive it. There are about 1.68 crore ration card holders in Bihar.

After the sudden lockdown, nearly 1.8 lakh migrant workers, as per official estimates, returned to the state. The local migrants during the rounds say more than 2 lakh migrant workers returned to Bihar after March 22. Most of them have to search for work to earn a livelihood.


Till Tuesday, there were 64 COVID-19 positive cases in Bihar, with one person dead. So far, the state has tested 3,037 samples, a number far less when compared to its huge population.



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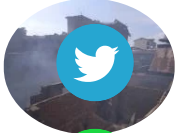
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