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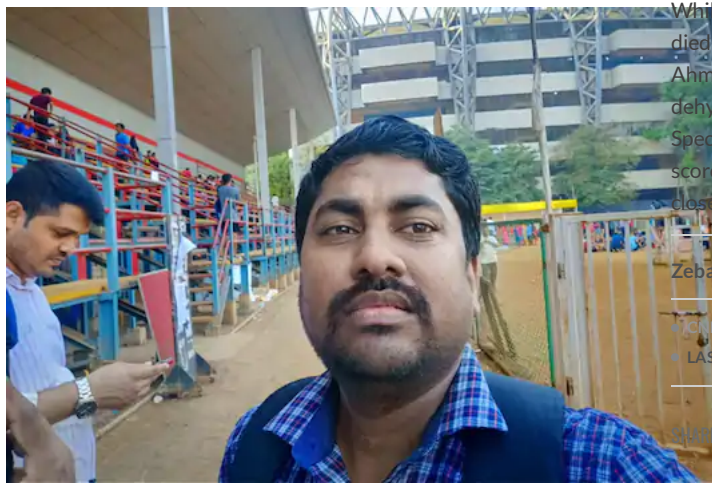
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Death in Shramik Special: 'For The Next Three Hours, I Sat Next to Ibrar's Corpse'



Ibrar, 33, was from Faizabad in Uttar Pradesh and worked as an office assistant in Mumbai's KC College.

While the post-mortem report concluded he died of a brain haemorrhage, 33 year old Ibrar Ahmed's family says it was caused by dehydration while travelling in a Shramik Special train from Mumbai to Lucknow in scorching heat with the fans not working for close to 36 hours.

Zeba Warsi

NEWS-NEWS18

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Ibrar Ahmed's last words were, "I'm feeling too hot. I can't bear it anymore." He died inside a Lucknow-bound Shramik Special train, just ahead of Jhansi after travelling for more than 36 hours, most of it without a fan. The summer heat was deadly, with the temperature above 40 degrees Celsius. Their coach allegedly had no electricity barely an hour since it started from CST station in Mumbai.

Ibrar, 33, was from Faizabad in Uttar Pradesh and worked as an office assistant in Mumbai's KC College. He is survived by his wife and a six-year-old daughter whom he was hoping to meet on Eid. He was headed home also to visit his mother who was recently discharged from hospital after a heart ailment.

But his ill-fated journey ended in a brain haemorrhage, allegedly caused by dehydration and exhaustion.

Ibrar was traveling with his cousin Rehmat Ali, his wife and two kids. They left Mumbai in the early hours of May 21 in special Shramik train number 01805. The train's scheduled time of departure was 11.15pm on May 20. They were asked to report at 5pm that day. But the train finally left CST station

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around 2.20am. They had already waited for 9 hours at the station before their journey even began, said Rehmat.

"When the train was parked at CST, the fan and light were working. But when it reached Kalyan, it got disconnected. When we reached Igatpuri station, 12 hours into the journey, around 3pm, I complaint to the stationmaster," said Rehmat.

But 15 hours since leaving Mumbai, the train was without electricity and still in Maharashtra, Rehmat said.

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"Many people were feeling hot; people were dehydrated. The train was running for 5 minutes and would stop for 1 hour in the blazing sun," he said.

On reaching Khandwa in Madhya Pradesh around 7pm, Rehmat complained once again, this time to the police at the railway station. "It had already been over 16 hours in the train without a fan. You can imagine how uncomfortable it must have been. When I told the cops at Khandwa, they sent someone to check, but he did nothing. We spent another night in the heat, without a fan," he said.

Finally, after more than 36 hours, around 3pm on May 22, the railways got the fans fixed in Bhopal.

"Ibrar kept saying he's not feeling well. He was feeling very hot. He was completely dehydrated. Even after the fan started working, the coach was so hot that it was not a respite. My wife gave him some sugar-water," said Rehmat.

When Ibrar's condition worsened, Rehmat called the railways helpline 139 for medical emergency around 4.30 pm. He was told that the next station was Lalitpur which had no medical support available and he must wait till Jhansi. But that was too late for Ibrar.

"His shirt was drenched as he was sweating profusely. He was very dehydrated and fell unconscious. He told me he couldn't bear the heat. Around 5pm, he died on the seat in front of me," said Rehmat.

After crossing Lalitpur, he was called back by the railways helpline to check on Ibrar. "I told them he's dead. They asked me to wait for Jhansi. For the next three hours, I sat next to Ibrar's corpse. I sent my kids and wife to the next coach," said Rehmat.

The train reached Jhansi at 8:45pm, and the family got off there. Ibrar's post-mortem was conducted at the railway hospital in Jhansi and brain haemorrhage was cited as the cause of death.

When we contacted railways, North Central Railway Spokesperson confirmed to News18, "Shramik special train no 01805 from CST to Lucknow. Message for medical assistance received in commercial control of Jhansi division at 17:50 hrs and accordingly Rly doctor was advised to attend the passenger at Jhansi station which was first station having availability of Railway doctor during its run on Jhansi division.

After arrival of train at 20:45 hrs Rly doctor attended. On examination passenger Ibrar Ahemad was checked by Railway doctor and declared dead. Dead body handed over to Civil authorities for further action for postmortem."

Ibrar was not the only one who died in a Shramik Special that day.

Sunil Tiwari, 22, who was travelling from Hyderabad to Balrampur was another person who succumbed in the same railway hospital in Jhansi.

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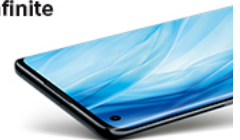
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“When we were at the hospital, we got to know another man died in another train and was brought to the same hospital. It seems there’s no value to the life of a ‘Shramik’ (worker) travelling in a ‘Shramik’ train,” said Rehmat.

Ibrar’s train reached Lucknow on the evening of May 23. A journey from Mumbai that usually takes around 24 hours carried on for 70 long hours.

“We left the train at Jhansi but later found out that it never reached its destination Lucknow that day. It was diverted to Bareilly. It reached Lucknow after yet another day. Is this a joke?” said Rehmat.

Ibrar’s mother, who just recovered from a heart ailment, is in shock. His 27-year-old wife Sarwar Jahan has been inconsolable and we didn’t ask her for a comment. His six-year-old daughter is unaware of what has happened. He has three brothers, all of working in Mumbai. One runs an AC-repair business, another has a mobile servicing shop. On learning about Ibrar’s death, the brothers left Mumbai in a hired car on the night of May 22. They drove non-stop for two nights and one day and, after 30 hours on the road, reached just before the last rites.

“There’s no empathy for us. These trains are taking 50-70 hours to reach their destination. We are humans, not animals. My brother was a man, not some livestock who was stuffed in a ‘special’ train for 3 days with no fan in this heat. Who will take responsibility for his death?” said Irfan Ahmed, Ibrar’s younger brother.

After multiples deaths, Railways has issued a statement saying passengers with medical conditions should travel only if necessary. But Ibrar had no medical condition, his family said. “My brother had no prior medical condition or health complication. He was a fit, healthy young man who lost his life while returning home,” said Irfan.

Ibrar was laid to rest at 7am on May 24 in Faizabad, nearly 4 days after he left Mumbai to return home.



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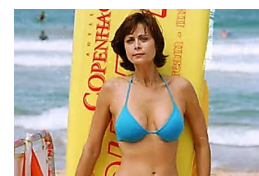
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