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18 day old new born dies on board Shramik train, Bengal migrant alleges apathy from Railways

In Focus



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"Our tickets were done for March 28, imagine my daughter would have been alive today if we could return home then. They stopped train services and we were stuck. Railways didn't help us" said the mother.



KEY HIGHLIGHTS

- Family boarded train from Kerela on June 8, hails from Purulia
- Baby born on May 25, family was desperate to return home
- Migrant alleges cold response from Railways 139 toll free number

Representational Image | Photo Credit: PTI

Kolkata: "My daughter was alive when we boarded the train but she couldn't make it to home", Dildar Ansari is an inconsolable father. His 18-day daughter died on board the 'Shramik' special train early on Wednesday morning. Ansari, a migrant worker was working at a bag factory in Kerela. He boarded the Shramik special train to New Jalpaiguri on Monday along with his wife and two children.

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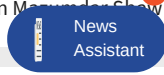
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"It was very hot inside the train. We don't know what happened to our child. She had no temperature. Between Beherampure and Baleshwar in Odisha, we felt our daughter was motionless. We immediately informed the train guard, he asked us to speak with the train driver. How do we do that? We dialled 139, the Indian railways' toll-free number. They asked us to approach the state government because we hail from Bengal. I called up my local police station in Purulia and the officers said they will do the needful. Our Police did help us. But sadly our daughter isn't alive anymore. The train didn't stop anywhere. Police spoke with Kharagpur GRP and we were offloaded here, my child was taken to hospital for postmortem, I wish the railway officers had taken my daughter to a hospital to save her life", lamented Dildar Ansari.

Rajiya Khatun was born on May 25, exactly two months after the nationwide lockdown was imposed. Dildar and his family had tickets booked for March 28, to return to Bengal. His wife, Reshma Khatun was 7 months pregnant then. There were 9 other migrant workers and their families along with him. All of them had decided to return but due to the lockdown were stuck at Kalinga in Kerela.



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"Our tickets were done for March 28, imagine my daughter would have been alive today if we could return home then. They stopped train services and we were stuck. The situation then was not that bad as compared to now. But trains have started now and we were desperate to return. Onboard the train, she was restless. We thought it was because of heat, later she started shivering. I breastfed my daughter at night and then she slept, never woke up after that. I wish the trains were on and we could return home in March," said Reshma.

Mamata Banerjee, West Bengal chief minister had questioned the role of railways ever since the migrant crisis came to the forefront, alleging that the union government had shown little empathy towards the plight of migrant workers. According to her, these Shramik trains should have ferried all the migrants to their homes before the lockdown was imposed so that they were not pushed to either adopt desperate measures like walking back home or live a miserable life without much help.

"What did you do for the migrants? You could have taken a few days to help them reach home before announcing the lockdown. They were forced to live in cramped conditions. Many got infected thus," said Ms Banerjee on Wednesday. Sadly her apprehensions came true for Dildar Ansari.



He and his family along all the 9 other Purulia bound migrant workers were assisted by district officials of West Midnapore. A vehicle was arranged for their return by road. They started in the evening from the hospital. A separate van was also arranged, it followed them carrying the coffin of 18 day old Raziya Khatun.

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