

Hunger death in Bara Banki

Contributed by Correspondent
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LUCKNOW: Even as chief minister is busy boasting about distribution of unemployment allowance and not a single case of farmer suicide in UP, district authorities in Bara Banki are working overtime to cover up the death of a 45-year-old dalit farm labourer who died in Gangauli Village of starvation. The labourer Shankar died on June 14 after battling with starvation for one month. His widow Phoolmati and six children await a similar fate. A total of 15 other dalit families in the village are also starving. But the administration is hell bent to prove that Shankar owned 11 biswan of land, a bank balance and the death was natural and not due to starvation. The inhumanity of the local gram panchayat members could be gauged from the fact that Shankar's body was hurriedly buried after pouring two sacks of salt for quick decomposition, said Phoolmati, who along with her children and local villagers came to the state capital on Monday with the help of some social workers in search of justice. Phoolmati told newsmen that block development officer, who came after her husband's death, certified that Shankar died due to starvation. "He gave me Rs 200 after knowing that there was not a single grain in the house," she said. However, later the report changed, she added. Two Dalit Panthar activists Bhagwati Prasad and Ayodhya Prasad took up the matter with the district administration. When the news became headlines in the newspapers, four days after the death, district magistrate Rama Shankar Shukla rushed to the spot along with senior officials. "The officers gave two sacks of rice and wheat to Phoolmati, posed for photographs and left promising Rs 1.2 lakh compensation for the family, provided they declare Shankar's death as natural," said Hanuman Prasad, district president of Kisan Sabha.

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