

New Seema Puri Police Station

**CHOOSE
THE
DEATH CARD**

PEOPLE'S UNION FOR DEMOCRATIC RIGHTS

(PUDR)

DELHI

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The Delhi press reported on 8th and 9th March the death of Ramzan, a Bangladeshi youth residing in the F Block jhuggis of New Seemapuri. Late night on 6th March, police constable Sukhpal Rathi had accosted Ramzan and three others who were playing cards and gambling in a newly constructed public lavatory. Ramzan sustained head injuries and died in hospital the next evening. The police assert that the head injuries were caused by fall from the lavatory roof top. But the jhuggi dwellers maintain that the injuries were due to beating and lathi blows by the constable. PUDR team met with the police, the SDM, the pradhan, and local residents. Following is its report.

New Seemapuri is a resettlement colony in north east Delhi across the Yamuna river near the Delhi-Ghaziabad border. Over the years many refugees from Bangladesh have settled here. Most of them do kabari work (rag picking), rickshaw pulling and the like. They live in filthy conditions and their means of livelihood are meagre and uncertain. Some of them are driven to petty crime. This complicates their situation as some of them are also 'illegal migrants'.

There are an estimated one lakh such refugees in Delhi who have no legal status. Most of them live in unauthorised jhuggis of trans-Yamuna colonies. Politicians get them voting rights and thus legalise their status if they are assured of their votes. Pradhans get them ration cards and legalise their status if they are given sufficient bribes. Recently the government has initiated deportation of these refugees. Train loads of them are sent with the help of the Border Security Force and handed over to the Bangladesh Rifles, at the border. However in Delhi the job of detecting and or detaining them is entrusted to the police, a force singularly unsuited to do the job.

Ramzan was one such Bangladeshi refugee, who made his living by rag picking. He has an uncle and brother also living in the area. The brother is a drug addict who shares no responsibility for the family back in Bangladesh. Ramzan shared rent for a

jhuggi and sent whatever money he could to his family. At the young age of eighteen he was the sole bread earner of his family.

Police

The SHO, Suberam Yadav, declined to make any statement. The DCP, Ranjeet Narayan, stated that an SDM inquest has been ordered and a departmental inquiry is under progress, headed by Additional DCP, Kewal Singh. The DCP gave assurances of action against the constable, subject to the enquiry reports. He pointed to a shift in statements by residents, of which more below. He added that the constable involved in the incident has been transferred to the district lines. The FIR, charging attempt to commit culpable homicide (S.308, IPC) has been made against 'persons unknown'.

Residents

Constable Sukhpal Rathi came around midnight on 6th March to the jhuggies looking for Idris, who seems to have informed him of some gambling activity in the area. Along with Idris, he went to the public lavatory. All four who were gambling there attempted to flee, but Ramzan did not manage to get away. Ibhramin, one of the team, told us that he had seen the constable beat Ramzan with a lathi. Lukman, a resident, who was watching a movie on a hired VCR with neighbours, was told by his wife that Ramzan was being beaten by the policeman. When Lukman reached the scene, along with others, Ramzan was in a state of unconsciousness. The constable had in the meantime gone to the house of the pradhan, Om Prakash. Ramzan was briefly revived by splashing water on him. He told Lukman that he had been beaten by the police. He again became unconscious. This was the last time he spoke.

Ramzan was carried to the pradhan's house. The constable said that if he took Ramzan to the thana, Rs.2000-3000/- would be needed to get him released. It would be simpler if they gave him Rs.500/- which Lukman and others promised to give him the next morning. By morning, however, Ramzan's condition had

worsened. Ramzan was taken to Swami Dayanand Hospital (Dilshad Garden) by his uncle and Lukman. Due to his critical condition he was shifted to LNJP (Irwin) hospital where he died on the evening of March 7th. The same evening the pradhan took Lukman to the police thana where Lukman gave a statement that Ramzan jumped from the roof top of the lavatory. The statement bears his thumb impression. The next day the residents, angered by Ramzan's death, protested against police high handedness. The post mortem was done at Irwin hospital and the body handed over to the uncle on March 9th.

The pradhan lives in a pucca house, has a two wheeler, and his brother is a constable in the Delhi police. According to him, Ramzan died of injuries from jumping off the rooftop. He states that this is what Ramzan told him. But adds that Ramzan may have said it for fear of the police. The pradhan denies that he went with Lukman to the thana. It may be mentioned here that the pradhan is popularly believed to be hand in glove with the plice.

PUDR demands :

- i) post mortem report be made accessible to the family and to civil rights organisations.
- ii) compensation be paid to the family of Ramzan
- iii) concerned constable be prosecuted under Sections 161, 166, 299, 304, 308 of the IPC.

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