

NADIA SHIBPUR SAI SADGURU SAMITY



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Festival called off to fund last rites

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Nakashipara (Nadia), Feb. 15: A Nadia village cancelled a puja held once a year amid fanfare because they thought the move will better serve a young physically challenged man who could not scrape enough for his father's last rites.

The residents of Shibpur village in Nakashipara handed over to Hari Mondal, 24, and his mother the Rs 5,500 they had collected for the puja held on the occasion of Maghi Purnima.

Hari's father Narayan, a labourer, died of tuberculosis, on February 1. He was the sole bread-earner for the family.

"I did not know what to do. We became penniless in his absence. Hari is challenged since birth and can't even speak properly. There is no way he can earn a living," said Hari's mother Kalpana.

The villagers, mostly labourers and masons, realised the mother and son's predicament. About 50 of them held a meeting and decided to scrap the puja and the festivities.

"We asked Kalpana to provide an estimate for Narayan's shradh. She said she needed about Rs 5,000. We handed over to her all the money we had raised," said Ritesh Biswas, a member of the puja committee.

The shradh was held on schedule.

A resident of Shibpur, about 150km from Calcutta, said the puja was being held for the past seven years. "This year, it was scheduled for February 9," said Prabhat Joarder.

Twenty villagers gave 5kg of rice each to Kalpana so she did not have to buy it for a few months.

