

ROOF OF MURADNAGAR CREMATORIUM COLLAPSES

'Waited outside as there were many people... then I saw roof crash down'

ANANYA TIWARI
GHAZIABAD, JANUARY 3

POONAM (40) was at a loss for words as she went through the list of 23 people who died at the Muradnagar crematorium on Sunday — many were her relatives. They had gathered for the last rites of her father, Jai Ram, when the roof of the structure collapsed.

"So many of our extended family members died... my aunt's sons, grandsons... my son's friend, nephews and cousins," is all she could say, sitting beside her injured husband Krishan Pal (45) at the MMG District Hospital in Ghaziabad. Her immediate family members survived.

At the hospital, families waited to take back bodies of their loved ones or sat by the injured. Dhanush Pal Singh (63),



All of those who died were men, and were relatives, friends and neighbours of the deceased.
Abhinav Saha

Ram's brother-in-law, said: "I waited outside the cremation area as many people were ahead of me... and I saw the entire roof come crashing."

Many families lost their only breadwinners.

Arvind Kumar (37), who was

Ram's neighbour, was found buried beneath the debris. He worked as an assistant to a doctor at Uttam Nagar in Delhi and is survived by his mother, wife and three children, all aged below 12. His mother Pushpa Devi (58) said: "Women weren't allowed

in the crematorium so I waited outside. When I heard the news, I came running to the hospital... so many relatives and neighbours are trying to locate bodies."

Waiting for his father's body was Class XI student Nitish Kumar (18). Sunil Kumar (44), a



labourer, was found crushed under the debris by his friends. The family lived near Ram's home. "I haven't told my mother and three younger siblings of his death. They think his leg is broken," he said.

A senior police officer said that while police are yet to register an FIR as facts are being gathered, there would be a probe on the construction quality of the roof. The land owning agency of the cremation ground was Nagar Palika Parishad Muradnagar and one Ajay Singh was given the contract of construction.

Ghaziabad District Magistrate Ajay Shanker Pandey said UP Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath has ordered an inquiry into the incident: "We are looking at the technicalities of the construction like the kind of material that was used... the structure was still under construction."