

Left cashless, migrant workers head home

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RUDRAPUR: "Ab hum apne gaon vapas jaa rahe hai," says Ram Avtar, an agricultural labourer, as his eyes wander over swathes of barren land in front of him.

The 45-year-old who hails from Shahjahanpur in UP has spent the past eight years in Udham Singh Nagar working on peoples' farms. But now, with barely any work following the demonetisation declaration, he says he has had enough. His wife has already packed their belongings into a small bundle. The few notes of Rs 100 he has managed to borrow from his employer in Jafarpur village will buy him the tickets home.

Avtar is one of the approximately 15,000 daily wage labourers in Udham Singh Nagar who have come to the region from UP and Bihar in search of better income opportunities but have now been hit hard by demonetisation. With no bank accounts or identity proofs and their employers not having enough cash to pay them, the labourers stare at an uncertain future. Many are faced with the dilemma of either waiting for things to improve or to return to their homes. Most have chosen the latter.