

IIT Bhubaneswar lends a helping hand to stranded migrant workers

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Bhubaneswar: IIT Bhubaneswar upon the initiative of Prof. R.V. Raja Kumar, Director, IIT Bhubaneswar has served 1008 packets of cooked and packed food had been received from the Labour Commission along with drinking water bottles were provided by the Unnat Bharat Abhiyan (UBA) of the Ministry of HRD. This apart, 2022 migrant workers stranded in the campus have been looked after with the association of NBCC the Project Management Consultant and the contractors during the lockdown period of Covid-19 pandemic. Also the faculty and students reached out to the family of a deceased labourer with a token of financial assistance.

The first batch of the food distribution was led by Prof. R.V. Raja Kumar, Director, IIT Bhubaneswar himself at the National Highway no. 16 near Khordha overbridge on 20th May, 2020 amidst the spell of Cyclone Amphan which was followed by team of volunteers consisting of students, faculty and staff members of the Institute near the Jatani Gate located on the National Highway while maintaining full isolation. This was again repeated on 21st May, 2020 by a team of volunteers served the migrant workers at the same location. Prof. R. K Panda, Coordinator and Dr. Seema Bahinipati, Co-Coordinator, Unnat Bharat Abhiyaan actively participated in this initiative. The team of volunteers included Dr. Rajkumar Singh, Dr. Srikant Gollapudi, Dr. S. Manikandan, Dr. Barathram Ramkumar and Dr. Tarakanta Nayak.

Prof. R.V. Raja Kumar, Director, IIT Bhubaneswar says, “Even 1900 construction workers who were held up in the IIT Campus, could not leave for their homes before the lockdown was announced. All the stranded migrant workers inside the campus were looked after well in association with NBCC and the contractors, protected from Covid-19 and the construction work was commenced by the end of April to facilitate work for them. They have been trying

to leave for their homes by foot throughout April and we persuaded them not to leave that way without permissions and vehicles and it has been a very bit challenge. Still they have been too keen to go, more so when some batches started leaving for their homes after relaxations were given by government. Permissions were obtained and 1800 of them left by buses with full formalities done during the last two weeks, despite that they may be facing no work for months and starvations there. It will take months for construction works also to resume in full form. I personally sent lists of them to the Chief Secretaries of their home states informing about their availability there for employment to help in possible immediate re-employment.”

The campsites also served the close to 1014 construction workers staying inside the campus with dry food, soaps and masks including 92 children distributed with cookies. The required money was raised by voluntary donations from 56 people of IIT Bhubaneswar community which also included generous donations from Kalinga Renewable Energy Manufacturers Pvt. Ltd., Bhubaneswar coordinated by Prof. Saroj Kumar. The same was distributed on 7th and 10th May, 2020 near IIT Dispensary Site near Staff Quarter by Dr. Partha Pratim Dey, Dr. Tarakanta Nayak, and Staff members at IIT Bhubaneswar.

An amount of Rs. 46,000 was mobilized from 92 donors which included students, staff and faculty of IIT Bhubaneswar. This was deposited in the account of the wife of a deceased worker belonging to Malda, West Bengal. The same was coordinated by Shri. Soumen Pal, PhD student of IIT Bhubaneswar who mobilized funds from the community at IIT Bhubaneswar. Giving back to the community, particularly in difficult times, has been at the core of our educational ethos at IIT Bhubaneswar.