


## Police rescue 462 migrant labourers in a week

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The migrant labourers who were rescued by police in Sambalpur district | Express

**BALANGIR:** In less than a week, police have rescued 462 migrant labourers, including women and children, most of them from Kantabanji railway station, where they had huddled to board a train in a search of greener pasture. Sources said most of the rescued labourers were from drought-prone pockets of Western Odisha and had such things in common — poverty, illiteracy and ignorance. And they were not migrating for money, but just to arrange two square meals to sustain themselves and their families. While migration and drought are synonymous to the region, for the first time, police seem to have acted and rescued them.

The first incident of migration came to light on October 15 when Khaprakhol police rescued 25 persons of Dedarha village. Police also arrested labour sardar Subal Mishra (35) of Dandamunda village and driver of the vehicle in which the labourers were supposed to be transported to Kantabanji railway station. The rescued labourers include 11 women and seven children. The migrants had been paid `5,000 as advance by Mishra and were being taken to work in a brick kiln in Telangana. Although police dropped them back in their homes, none is sure whether they will stay back or take an alternative route to migrate.

On the same day, Patnagarh police had rescued 18 migrants from the house of labour sardar Barun Karwal of Barbahal village. They were hired by Karwal from Bargarh district to work in brick kiln in Andhra Pradesh. He had paid advance of `20,000 per head to take them to work in brick kiln. On October 16, out of 88 migrants, seven were rescued by Lathore police while on October 18, Kantabanji police rescued 302 labourers from a forest near Kantabanji while they had been huddled to be taken to Telangana.

Police also seized three MUVs and arrested the drivers. The labourers were supposed to board the train at Kanatabanji railway station. A case has been registered against Ashok Mohapatra, Jaga Behera and Siba Prasad Sahu on the basis of complaint of Assistant Labour Officer Debaprasad Mohanty.

The migrant labourers hail from Belpada and Bangomunda in the district, Binka in Sonepur besides from Nuapada district. They have been taken back to their homes by the police.

Balangir SP K Siva Subramani S said cases have been registered against 18 labour sardars and seven among them have been arrested. However, he admitted that lack of work in villages and poverty were behind the migration. He said they have deployed decoys and strengthened intelligence to check migration. The district police would continue the drive against illegal human trafficking, he added.

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