

6 bonded labourers rescued from brick kiln unit in Erode

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Coimbatore: Six persons from two families, who were forced into bonded labour in a brick kiln unit at Muniyappanpalayam village near Anthiyur in Erode district, were rescued on Saturday and sent to their native villages in Nagapattinam and Viluppuram districts.

The rescued people were identified as Thangarasu, 50, his wife Rajeswari, 45, daughter Suguna, 26 and son-in-law Ayyappan, all hailing from Kadalankudi village near Mayiladuthurai in Nagapattinam district, and Mahadevan, 70, and his wife Rani, 55, from Kuchipalayam village in Viluppuram district.

Based on a tip, Gobichettipalayam revenue divisional officer Govindaraju visited the brick kiln unit at Muniyappanpalayam on Saturday and conducted inquiry with the labourers.

Mahadevan told the officer that he had received Rs 65,000 as advance from the brick kiln unit owners three years ago. "We weren't paid since then. We are given 50 paise per brick as wage and not allowed to visit our hometown," he said

Thangarasau told the Gobichettipalayam revenue divisional officer that he had received Rs 25,000 a year ago. "My daughter's family also received the same amount. Apart from that, we are not paid. They are treating us like slaves," he said.

When they pointed out that they were not able to escape from the brick kiln unit, the officer rescued them and took them to the Anthiyur government hospital, where doctors conducted health check-up.

The information was passed to the district collector, S Prabhakaran, who immediately ordered the revenue officials to send them to their hometowns.

"We will take action against the brick kiln owners under the bonded labour system (abolition) act. Further investigation is on," the Gobichettipalayam revenue divisional officer said.