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Metro construction workers getting free food, shelter

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Nagpur: Even as lakhs of construction workers in the country are desperately trying to go back to their villages as they are unable to buy food items, MahaMetro's construction workers are getting free food and shelter. Not only this, the workers are being regularly checked for coronavirus by doctors engaged by its contractors.

A MahaMetro spokesperson said that about 2,900 workers, who were unable to go back to their homes, are being taken care of in their labour camps. TOI visited one such camp at Nagalwadi (near Hingna) and talked to the workers. They said that they were getting sufficient food.

The Nagalwadi camp, housing 300 labourers, belongs to MahaMetro contractor Afcons. Gaurav Tripathi, an Afcons employee, said that a doctor from Lata Mangeshkar Hospital comes to the camp office near the camp and checks the workers for coronavirus symptoms. An ambulance is also available for ready use.

"We have set up two isolation rooms so that if somebody has cough and cold, he is kept there away from others. As soon as it is possible, we will shift the patient to government hospitals," said Tripathi.

Lav Kush Kumar, a labourer from Uttar Pradesh, said that while he was getting food, he would prefer to go home. "There is nothing to do the whole day. Boredom is a big problem," he told TOI. Naresh Mandal, a worker from West Bengal, said the same thing. Both the workers said that they were tested by the doctor every three to four days. Most of the workers in Nagalwadi camp are from UP, WB, Bihar, Jharkhand and Odisha.

A MahaMetro spokesperson said that about 5,500 construction workers were employed in Nagpur Metro project in the first week of March. "Hundreds went to their native villages for Holi and did not return till the lockdown was announced. Some 600 workers were from nearby districts and went home before the lockdown. Now, there are 2,871 workers in 40 camps," he said.

He further said that all the camps and offices were fumigated and disinfected frequently. “The workmen are being educated about the importance of social distancing. Masks, gloves etc., have been distributed and are available in adequate stock. Twelve thermal scanners are available and workmen are randomly tested for high temperatures,” he said.

“A safety team comprising 20 professionals and their team are on emergency duty. Senior officials visit worksites regularly and ensure that the actions are effective. Detailed emergency preparedness and response guidelines have been prepared and implemented. Psychological counselling is being offered to workers to ensure that they stay in proper frame of mind,” said the spokesperson.

He added that eight doctors were taking care of the workers full time or part time. The number of male nurses employed by MahaMetro is eleven.