

## **Anganwadi workers seek regularisation of services, more grants for ICDS**

- Special Correspondent

The district unit of the State Anganwadi Workers Association, affiliated to the Centre of Indian Trade Unions, has opposed the cut in funds for the Integrated Child Development Scheme (ICDS).

Addressing presspersons here on Friday, Sushila Nada, general secretary of the district unit of the association, said that the ICDS was started in 1975 in order to provide nutritious food to the children and mothers so that they did not suffer malnutrition.

This was a long-term programme and now had about nine crore beneficiaries.

In spite of this effort by the government, all-round progress of the children was still a challenge.

Hence it was necessary to increase monetary and human resources for the programme. It was the right of every child to have access to education, food and health, Ms. Nada said.

Instead of increasing fund allocation for the programme, the Union government slashed grants for it from Rs. 18,103 crore to Rs. 8,245.77 crore in the 2015-16 Budget. It was incumbent on all members of Parliament to question this, she said. It was the anganwadi workers who did the work related to the Bhagyalakshmi Bond, pulse polio vaccination, surveys and elections, besides their routine work. As per the recommendations of 45th Indian Labour Conference in 2012, anganwadi workers, midday meal workers, and Accredited Social Health Activists, should be considered as employees and given minimum wages and job security. Though governments spoke a lot about women's empowerment, they had had not implemented these recommendations.

The government should set up a separate department for ICDS and provide it with all facilities.

The ICDS should not be privatised. The Union government should provide a grant of Rs. 36,000 crore for ICDS, Ms. Nada said.

Anganwadi workers and assistants should be treated as class three and class four government employees. They should be given a minimum wage of Rs. 15,000 per month, she said.

Geeta Shetty, president of district unit of the association, Sabitha Shetty and Rathi S. Shetty, vice-presidents, and Ashalatha Shetty, treasurer, were present.