

Need to address the problems being faced by ASHA Workers in Kerala and other parts of the country ? Laid

DR. SHASHI THAROOR (THIRUVANANTHAPURAM): I wish to draw the attention of the Hon?ble Minister of Health and Family Welfare to the plight of Accredited Social Health Activists (ASHA) workers, who form the backbone of India?s rural healthcare system. ASHA workers have played an instrumental role in improving maternal and child health, increasing immunisation rates, and raising awareness about nutrition and sanitation. Their contributions were especially crucial during the COVID-19 pandemic when they played a frontline role in the healthcare response. Despite being overburdened with responsibilities and working 12 to 14 hours/day, ASHAs are still classified as volunteers and receive meagre honorariums and incentives, which are often delayed, leaving them and their families struggling financially. In Kerala, for instance, ASHAs earn only ₹7,000/month. Over the years, ASHAs have staged nationwide protests, demanding official employee status, payment of arrears, better working conditions, retirement benefits, and access to mental and social security services. These ongoing protests highlight the systemic undervaluation of community health workers in India. I, therefore, urge the Minister to take immediate action, in coordination with state Governments, to address the concerns of ASHA workers. This includes increasing their monthly incentives and honorariums, clearing all pending dues, and officially recognising them as formal healthcare workers. Additionally, a social security and retirement benefits framework must be devised for long-serving ASHAs.