

Regarding need to make services of ASHA workers permanent across the country

ADV. DEAN KURIAKOSE (IDUKKI): I wish to raise a matter of urgent public importance regarding the plight of over one million Accredited Social Health Activists (ASHA) who serve as the backbone of India's rural healthcare system. Despite their critical role in implementing national health programs ranging from maternal care and immunization to pandemic management, they continue to be classified as "honorary volunteers." The current remuneration structure, comprising a meager fixed honorarium and performance-based incentives, is woefully inadequate given rising inflation and the nature of their full-time workload. This financial insecurity forces many of these frontline warriors into debt and poverty. Therefore, I urge the Government of India to recognize ASHA workers as permanent workers and significantly increase the central budgetary allocation for the National Health Mission. The government must ensure a minimum fixed monthly salary of ₹21,000, in line with recommendations for skilled workers. Furthermore, they must be provided with statutory benefits, including Provident Fund (PF), ESI coverage, and a guaranteed pension. Strengthening the financial security of ASHA workers is not just a labor right but a prerequisite for a robust public health infrastructure.