

TIRUCHIRAPALLI

Domestic workers demand higher wages

A group of domestic workers who spoke at a workshop on 'Violence Against Domestic Worker' organised jointly by Needs Trust and Deeps - Tamil Nadu here on Saturday, underlined the need for higher wages. The entire unorganised sector of domestic workers should be incorporated under the schedule of Minimum Wages Act.

Initiating a discussion, a senior house worker, Velankanni, said that she was working for 30 years. Although she got some privileges such as interest-free advance upto Rs. 5,000 to meet any unforeseen expenditure, she did not get adequate wages.

"From Rs. 50 three decades ago, my wages has shot up to just Rs. 1,300," she said, adding that she wanted at least Rs. 1,500 to be fixed as the minimum wage for her.

Susai Mary, Lawrence Mary and P. Manimekalai, participants at the workshop, said that maid servants did not enjoy job security. Stiff competition among these women, gripped by poverty was being exploited by the masters to suddenly 'dismiss' them with immediate effect.

In fact, most of the workers had come to attend the meeting without informing their masters so as to avoid their wrath.

R. Marudhanayagam, managing director, Needs Trust, said that the objective of the workshop was to enlist these unorganised workers under the provisions of Minimum Wages Act. As most of the workers were widows or from economically weaker sections, the educational opportunities for their wards should be guaranteed. Antony Stephen, Assistant Professor of Holy Cross College, said that maid servants should be treated with dignity and honour. Job security, health care and pension should also be ensured. Gayathri, Research Officer and M. Seethalakshmi, District coordinator of Thozhi Federation, Renuka from All India Democratic Women's Association spoke. They emphasised the need for banning sequences demeaning the dignity of house workers, in dramas, stories and films.

M. Nirajnana, Managing Trustee, read out the resolutions adopted in support of these demands at the valedictory session.



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SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

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