

Trust fraud: HC asks state to probe edu dept officials

Says NGOs not authorised to recruit teachers for govt schools

S GODSON WISELY DASS @Thoothukudi

EVEN as teachers defrauded by Aadhava Trust demand the arrest of Balakumaresan, the director of the trust, the Madurai Bench of the Madras High Court has directed the school education department to investigate erring officials who permitted the private trust to engage teachers at government schools.



EXPRESSION ILLUSTRATION

Two years ago, an NGO called Aadhava Trust, functioning from Arumuganeri in Thoothukudi, had appointed teachers for over 3,000 vacant posts in various government schools across Thoothukudi, Tirunelveli, Kanyakumari, Virudhunagar, and Madurai at a meagre income of ₹5,000. The trust is also said to have collected deposit ranging from ₹2 lakh to ₹5 lakh from each teacher. It went bankrupt, however, leaving the teachers unpaid for more than six months, and their deposits not refunded either.

proached earlier, the court had mediated a negotiation between the victims and the Aadhava Trust, asking the latter to refund their deposits, but the trust failed. As per the court order, Aadhava Trust had colluded with the school education authorities to appoint teachers at government schools, despite the Teacher Recruitment Board (TRB) being solely responsible for recruitment.

The court had said that chief education officer and district education officer had permitted the petitioner to provide infrastructure and teaching facilities to the government school, which could not have happened without the help of some erring officials. The court

directed the SED director to conduct an inquiry with the officials, who allowed the trust to engage teachers, and take appropriate action.

Meanwhile, RTI replies obtained by activist J Michael Anto Jeenious revealed that the SED had permitted the trust to engage government schools to help students recover from the learning gap due to COVID-19 pandemic. Moreover, the SED had not exchanged any Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the volunteering trust, which the RTI noted, is not authorised to hire teachers. Further, SED authorities had permitted the trust to appoint teachers based on the communication of deputy secretary, dated September 13, 2021, to school education commissioner and another communication dated September 22, 2021 sent by joint director of SED to chief education officers of all districts.

SM Gandhi Mallar, who is leading the defrauded teachers, had urged the government to arrest Aadhava Trust Director Balakumaresan since the court had denied him bail. Balakumaresan remains absconding, but continues to communicate on social media groups, he alleged. NEEM Trust Director Louis Rajkumar, who was earlier jailed for 63 days, had secured bail, but still has not returned the deposits to the teachers.



Aspirant climbing rope during a police selection event at battalion ground in Madurai | KK SUNDAR

STRONG-HOLD

EXPRESS READ Woman says man cheated her of ₹3 lakh

KANNIYAKUMARI: A 42-year-old woman of Thiruvananthapuram staged a protest in front of the house of a man, a resident of Parvathipuram in Nagercoil, on Thursday accusing him of cheating and swindling money after making a false promise of marriage. She claimed that the man, who is in his mid-forties, befriended her, and swindled her off ₹3 lakh and 25 sovereigns of gold ornaments, after promising to marry her.

Shengottai residents enter council meeting hall with pots, demand drinking water

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE @Tenkasi/Tirunelveli

IN a bid to resolve the drinking water crisis in their region, Shengottai residents, holding empty pots, entered the meeting hall of the municipal council here on Thursday and demanded Chairperson Ramalakshmi to put an end to the water shortage. According to sources, the residents of ward 1 had been staging a protest in front of the municipal office in Shengottai alleging that they have not received drinking water for the past 40 days.

promised to temporarily arrange drinking water on tanker lorries and fix the pipeline damage as a permanent solution.

Meanwhile, in Alangulam, the residents of ward 6, including councillor Babitha Lingavelraj, staged a dharna in front of the panchayat office demanding drinking water, sewage drains and other facilities. In Tirunelveli, the Nanguneri union panchayat council chaired by Sowmiya Arockia Edwin rejected three resolutions put forward by Collector KP Karthikeyan and 109 other resolutions by the block development office administration.

The council passed only three resolutions moved by the chairperson, and the councillors alleged that the collector insisted that they cancel the already passed resolution condemning the non-cooperation by block development officer.



Shengottai residents of ward 1 protesting inside the council meeting hall | EXPRESS

Women of SHGs receive loans worth ₹47.58 crore

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE @Kanniyakumari

AFTER Minister for Youth, Welfare, and Sports Development Udhayanidhi Stalin inaugurated distribution of loans to women self-help groups via video conference on Thursday,

Milk and Dairy Development Minister T Mano Thangaraj gave away loans worth ₹47.58 crore to 489 SHG members at Scott Christian College in Nagercoil.

Minister Thangaraj said that 11,248 SHGs are functioning in Kanniyakumari district. Of

these, 5,312 SHGs function in rural areas, while 5,926 function in urban areas. The loans are being provided in a bid to improve their livelihood. Loans worth ₹524.84 crore have been provided to 6,488 women SHGs till December 2023. With the loans given on Thursday, 99%

of the target for distribution of loans was met. The minister also handed over Mathi Express e-vehicle to three beneficiaries. Other than Thangaraj, District Collector PN Sridhar, Nagercoil Mayor R Mahesh, Commissioner Anand Mohan, and others were present.

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