

Anganwadi Posts are lying vacant in Odisha

BHUBANESWAR: Against the backdrop of the Nagada incident, the state government on Tuesday directed the district collectors to upgrade the anganwadi centres (AWCs).

The tribal village, where at least 20 children died due to malnutrition in past six months, exposed the development claims of the BJD government, which is ruling the state for past 16 years.

A reality check found that 60% centres lack basic infrastructure. Of the total 71,306 sanctioned AWCs, only 28,187 are running from own buildings.

The remaining AWCs are operating either from rented houses or are non-existent, official sources said. Most posts of anganwadi workers and integrated child development services (ICDS) supervisors are lying vacant, the sources said.

"We have directed the district collectors to find out AWCs in unconnected areas and extend basic facilities to these centres. They have also been instructed to report the difficulties they are facing in running these AWCs," said women and child development secretary Vishal Dev after a videoconferencing with the collectors.

On the large-scale vacancy, Dev said the collectors were asked to expedite the recruitment process. Dev said the state government has directed the collectors to open mini- anganwadi centres in 1281 villages, including two in Nagada, which would run 24x7 for coming several months.

Even though the Centre doles out a huge amount under the ICDS scheme, the state government has failed to develop even 50% of anganwadi centres, said the sources. For 2015-16 financial year, Odisha received central assistance to the tune of Rs 6,200 crore under ICDS scheme.

Only 551 AWCs of the total 2,603 run from own buildings in Jajpur district. In tribal-dominated districts, Malkangiri has 977 full-fledged AWCs out of sanctioned 1,250 centres. The full-fledged AWCs in other districts are Nabarangapur (1,405), Koraput (1,447), Nuapada (824), Kalahandi (1,239) and Sonapur (515). Around 46% tribal children up to five years are underweight in the state.