

# Learning Bengali in TN govt schools

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Miles from their home, in a land where none speak their mother tongue, eight-year-old Melan and two of his siblings are studying in Bengali in a government Adi Dravidar Welfare School in Karur district of Tamil Nadu.

They are among 84 children of migrant labourers from West Bengal to have enrolled in five primary and middle schools — three in Sanapiratti in Thanthoni block and two in SIDCO industrial estate in Karur block. Going the extra mile, the education department, under Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA), is procuring textbooks from their counterparts in West Bengal for Class I to VIII every academic year. "We have also engaged three qualified people among the migrant labourers as teachers in the five centres. They are teaching the



**HOME CONNECT:** S Baishaki with her students at the Adi Dravidar Welfare School Sanapiratti

subjects in their mother tongue. They are given periodical training along with our teachers," district coordinator of SSA P Shanmuga Sundaram.

Though a few migrant labourers send their wards to matriculation schools, majority of them prefer the ADW schools. The children are also beneficiaries of the TN government's welfare scheme for students.

S Baishaki, 23, has been tea-

ching Bengali to her six-year-old son and 30 others for the past two years in the primary and middle schools in Sanapiratti on the outskirts of Karur town. "The efforts taken by the department here is laudable as it gives the children an opportunity to continue their studies in their mother tongue," Baishaki said. "I never imagined to be a teacher when I came here with my husband, who works

in a mosquito net making unit," said Baishaki, who has studied till Class XII.

Like her, Rubina Katool from South 24 Parganas district in West Bengal has been handling classes for the students in special centres in SIDCO industrial estate in Karur. Melan, a Class III student, said his younger brother Mangal and elder sister Vilomi were also in the same school. "Vilomi is studying here from class I. The parents are happy about the facility and noon meal. They drop the children on their way to work," said T Malathi, headmistress of ADW primary school in Sanapiratti.

The families travel to their native place in April and many do not return. Several middle schoolgirls are married off at an early age. "It is undoing our effort to give education and motivate them to continue their studies," said a teacher, on condition of anonymity.