

Caregivers call for monthly govt pension for mentally ill people

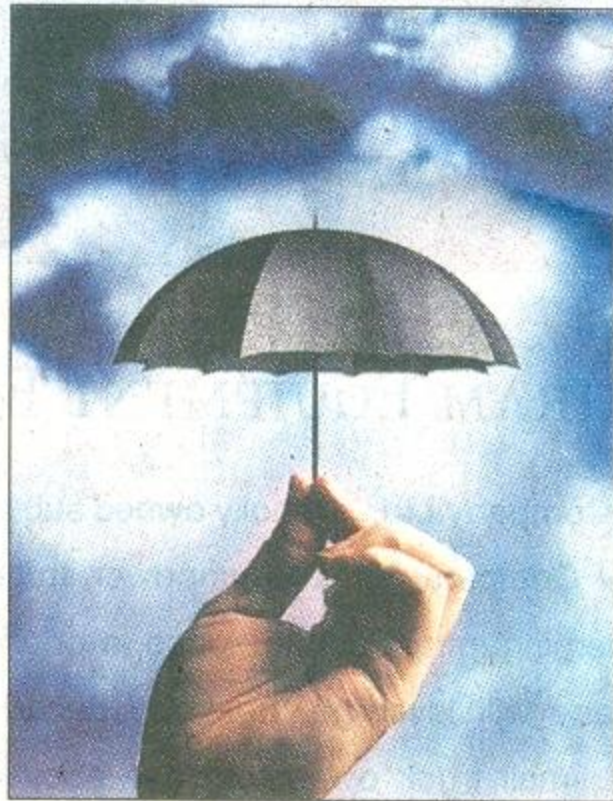
TIMES NEWS NETWORK

Chennai: Ratnavalli (name changed) is a widow who makes a living as a tailor. While she supports her daughter and son on the income she gains from the job, Ratnavalli says she stays away from community events because her daughter is mentally ill and needs to be under constant supervision.

In such a situation, a consistent form of financial assistance from the government would be of great help, Ratnavalli adds.

Following World Mental Health Day (observed on October 10), non-profit organisation The Banyan organised a meeting of about 600 caregivers from across the state here on Tuesday to highlight the need for persons with mental illness to receive a disability allowance from the state government.

In a petition to be submitted by 15 representatives to chief minister M Karunanidhi and social welfare minister Geetha Jeevan, it stated that the needs of those affected with mental ill-



ness were diverse and coupled with acute deprivation. Researchers at The Banyan estimated that 5,38,620 poor people with mental illness in the state were entitled to social assistance under the

Indira Gandhi National Disability Pension Scheme introduced by the government of India.

The scheme entitles persons in the age group of 18 to 64 with a disability, including mental illness, living below the poverty line who report 80% of disability or more to a pension of ₹400 a month.

Activists in Tamil Nadu are requesting the state government to raise this amount to ₹1,000 a month with a yearly increase considering the rising prices of essential commodities and problems related to the survival of the mentally ill.

“However, the process of procuring ID cards to judge the extent of mental illness as a disability is a problem. Even if people do manage it, the money does not reach them. Officials tell us that if a GO is released stating that the need of this group is significant, then the pension released may become a reality,” said P L Porkodi, director (advocacy), The Banyan.