

Kerala Writes History With India's First Transgender Policy

Author - Nishi Malhotra, Published on - 30.11.2015

In a historic move, the state of Kerala has become the first in the country to roll out a transgender policy aimed at ending societal stigma attached to this sexual minority group. The 'State Policy for Transgenders in Kerala 2015' was released by Chief Secretary Jiji Thomson at the 'International Conference on Gender Equality' in Kovalam on November 12, 2015. He handed over the first copy of the policy to noted transsexual-gender minority activist Akkai Padmashali. The policy covers all categories of transgenders, including male to female transgenders and intersex people. It also stresses on the rights of the minority community to self identify themselves as man, woman or transgender as stated in the Supreme Court judgement (2014). The policy states that a Transgender Justice Board should be set up to ensure equal rights and protection to the transgender community by providing gender identity certificates.



Photo: Wikimedia This will hopefully enable

transgenders to obtain non-discriminatory access to education with scholarships and ensure equal access in social security, public transport, and health. It will also help them avail other social and economic opportunities and resources and services. It will give them right to equal treatment under the law and the right to live life without violence. Government departments will be required to take action if transgenders are harassed for cross-dressing or for gender-specific behaviour. The Department of Social Justice will oversee the implementation of the policy. It will have Social Justice secretary as its Member-Secretary and secretaries of various departments as members. This body will also conduct a mid-term evaluation of the policy implementation and results in 2018. "This is a watershed...a very important event. For a long time, transgenders have not received their due in the state's developmental framework...we may be the first state in the country to have a rights-based policy on transgenders," Thomson said. Dr M K Muneer, Social Justice and Panchayats Minister, said the policy would ensure complete freedom of expression and the right to participate in the state's decision-making process to transgenders. However, transgender activist Akkai Padmashali feels there is still work to be done to make the policy more comprehensive and useful. "I went through Kerala's policy. It is a beautiful policy, however, it does have some issues. It does not completely address issues pertaining to laws like IPC Section 377. It could have introduced awareness on transgender in school curriculum," she told [The New Indian Express](#). from **The Better India**