

# GO on equality for transgenders

By PRIYAMVATHA P

Chennai, March 6: In a significant move that will bring a change in the lives of the transgenders in Tamil Nadu, a Government Order has been issued to ensure equal opportunity to them in society.

The Government Order on 'Rehabilitation of Aravanis' (Eunuchs) was recently passed by the Social Welfare Department based on the recommendations of a sub-committee, comprising government officials from the Social Welfare, Health and Education departments along with social workers.

The order states that the Social Welfare Department will seriously look into legalising Sex Re-Construction (SRC) surgery in Government Hospitals for the transgenders. At present, the surgery is not legal in the state, forcing many transgenders to undergo the surgery in other states. The order says the Social Welfare and Health departments will soon come out with a separate plan to legalise the surgery.

The Health Department in coordination with recognised and qualified counsellors (Health and Social Defence Departments) will also provide counselling for Men Having Sex with Men (MSM) and transgenders regarding the surgery. The department will identify MSMs at an early stage to prevent complications.

In an important move, the order has further stated that government offices should not discriminate against the transgenders.

"Serious action will be taken against those who ill treat or misbehave with the transgenders," said sources.

Instead, transgenders will be given priority in all government offices and hospitals on a humanitarian basis. "Government doctors should provide proper treatment and counselling to them without discrimination," sources explained.

The government will take serious disciplinary action against schools and colleges that deny admission for transgenders based on their sexuality.

The School and Higher Education departments will soon issue necessary circulars to this effect.

To guide the transgenders on the right path, schools are expected to provide counselling to children with behavioural changes and teachers will be trained for this, said the order.

Family counselling by teachers and NGOs will be made mandatory in all areas to ensure that such children are not disowned by the family. The Education Department will be involved for this purpose.

For providing livelihood for transgenders, special vocational training and skill development training will be given to a considerable number of them in a phased manner. The number of self-help groups, already in place for them, will be increased.

Besides these, the government will soon take up the assessment and survey of the transgenders in the state.

The order says that District Collectors will take up the survey through revenue officials. For a better understanding of issues concerning the transgenders, a research on their behaviour and lifestyle will be taken up.

The District Collector will be the key person responsible for implementation of the orders. The circulars have already been sent to them and they will have to coordinate with all the officials and police personnel.

Further, the Collectors will conduct special grievance meetings regularly. It is also planned to sensitise officials on the treatment of transgenders.

## KEY POINTS

- TN Government considering legalisation of sex re-construction surgery
- Serious action against govt officials discriminating transgenders
- Disciplinary action against schools and colleges denying admission to transgenders
- Priority in government offices and hospitals
- Counselling for children with behavioural change in school
- Counselling for families to prevent isolation of

