

State govt to empower third gender, groom them as entrepreneurs

It has roped in EDII to offer a one-year course in entrepreneurship and soft skills to 2,000 transpersons and help them set up business

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It has been seven years since the largest democracy of the world recognised transpersons as voters under the gender identity of their choice following a Supreme Court ruling. However, even today, leading a life of dignity remains an uphill task for them owing to societal stigma associated with the community. Now, Gujarat government is in the process of launching an entrepreneurship programme for them so that they start their own business ventures and become job givers too.

Around 2,000 transsexuals, cross-dressers and transvestites will be trained over a period of one year.

The Entrepreneurship Development Institute of India (EDII) in Bhat will be introducing the course for the third gender in the new financial year.

The theory course will cover all about identifying businesses, gauging viability of the same, products and services, managing the finances and government schemes that are available for micro, medium and small enterprises. The practicals that will go on for 11 months will involve hands-on-training and assistance to them for setting up their businesses -- right from filling the bank form to credit linkages and purchasing equipment and technology, they will be guided thoroughly.

Moreover, if any of the participants have a bigger idea, then EDII can also help them incubate their ideas in Cradle, their incubation centre. The Social Justice and Empowerment department had carried out a study to find out the need for such a programme before roping in EDII.

Additional Chief Secretary, Manoj Aggarwal, SJ& E Department, said,



REPRESENTATIONAL PICTURE

As per 2011 census, Gujarat has 12,000 registered third gender people



“ We want to help third gender get equal opportunities so they live with dignity and earn money through respectful means. We want them to become job givers too

—Manoj Aggarwal, ACS,
SJ&E Department

“We want to help the third gender get equal opportunities in the society so that they live with dignity and earn money through respectful means. Moreover, we want them to become job givers too by taking up entrepreneurship.” He added, “The EDII programme will offer them entrepreneur-

ship courses of their interest to help them conduct a business of their choice.” EDII will have 25 faculty members to mentor and counsel the participants throughout the programme and handhold them till they get settled in their business ventures.

Director of the Department of Projects at EDII, SB Sareen, told Mirror, “As directed by the social justice department, our aim is to ensure that the community gets the fair chance at living a comfortable life like any of us.”

Explaining further, Sareen said, “Considering that most are either school dropouts or have never attended school, we are trying to train them in business skills that can help them start a micro-enterprise. This will also help them employ others in their community.”

“We have been working for transpersons for over two decades now and have been training many in vocational skills too. So, we know this was the need of the hour. We appreciate the efforts of the Gujarat government and EDII to help transpersons be self-reliant and establish their business,” said Sylvester Merchant, co-founder, Lakshya Trust.