Driving change, one step at a time

Driving licence to include third gender

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The State’s new step would allow transgender persons to get driving licences citing their real gender. In a major boon to transgender community, driving licences would now include the third gender.

The State government’s move is in accordance with the Supreme Court’s landmark judgment of 2014 wherein it asked for equal rights and inclusive policies for transgender persons and other sexual minorities.

Officials of the Road Transport Authority (RTA) believe that the commuting problems of transgender persons would soon end as the government has decided to implement the Centre’s directions in the wake of the Supreme Court judgment for granting driving licences to them.

Till now, transgender persons depended on auto-rickshaws or cabs for their travel needs. They did not use public transport as they could not sit in both gents or ladies seats. But travelling by auto-rickshaws or cabs was expensive.

Joint Transport Commissioner C. Ramesh said the Centre made certain amendments to the Central Motor Vehicles Rules-1989, and sent the official Gazette to the State government for implementation recently.

He said the department was designing a new online application form for driving licence that includes a third column and would be open to public from next month.

“This will enable the transgender persons to apply for learner’s licence and permanent driving licence under their own identity,” he said, adding that their gender would not be specified on the licence cards unlike in others’ licences.

Mr. Ramesh said the application process for them to avail a licence would not be different from other applicants.

Bittu Karthik, an associate professor at Ashoka University, said it was a great move by the government. “I hope the government also realises that many transgender persons have identified themselves as male or female and not as transgender persons as they did not have a choice earlier. Now they can approve changes in gender and name on the licences,” he said.

When asked about the gender change on the already issued licences, Mr. Ramesh said as of now, there was no such option.

Incremental change

Welcoming the move, Vyjayanti Vasanta Mogli, an activist for transgender rights, said it was a small step towards the development of the community. “It’s an incremental change, but not radical,” she said.

She said not all transgender persons own vehicles or know how to drive one. “First, they have to learn how to drive and for that, we should get access to driving schools,” Ms. Mogli said.