

Move to educate migrant workers in most literate State

- Staff Reporter



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THE HINDU

Migrants at Perumbavoor near Kochi. Perumbavoor has one of the largest migrant settlements. PHOTO: THULASI KAKKAT

Kerala government will teach them to read and write in Hindi and Malayalam, besides creating legal awareness.

The sense of alienation that migrant workers in Kerala feel will come down substantively if the efforts of the Kerala State Literacy Mission Authority (KSLMA) prove a success.

The KSLMA is all set to launch a social literacy drive to integrate migrant labourers into Kerala society, by imparting reading and writing skills to them and to orient them to the culture of the State. A large majority of the 25 lakh migrant labourers in the State, many of whom hail from North India, are illiterate even in their mother tongue, according to KSLMA. As a result, they are ignorant in legal, health and environmental matters, resulting in poor quality of living as well as exploitation by their employers. This leads to gaps in their social relations with the locals.

"Our effort is to give them minimum language skill so that they are able to interact better with their hosts," says KSLMA director P.S. Sreekala. The workers, who contribute heavily to the State's development, were being "ostracised." The literacy programme aimed at solving this issue by teaching them to read and write in Malayalam as well as Hindi, apart from introducing them to the social and cultural features of the State, and creating legal and health-related awareness, she said.

Launch in January

The first phase of the programme will be launched in January 2017 in Perumbavoor, Ernakulam, by undertaking a survey of the migrant labourers living there. Perumbavoor was chosen due to the large number of migrant labourers there. The curriculum will be finalised based on the results of the pilot survey, and the programme expanded to other districts. Local governing bodies, Kudumbasree, the departments of labour and social justice and the State library council will assist KSLMA in implementing the programme, among other agencies. Although a similar programme was mooted in 2013, it was not implemented.

KSLMA is initiating three other programmes this year, including a continuing education mission for members of the trans-gender community, an environmental literacy mission and a functional literacy drive, aimed at the coastal areas of Kasaragod, Malappuram and Thiruvananthapuram.

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