



Kerala reserves job for HIV positive candidate

IANAS



A MUCH NEEDED BOOST: Those affected with HIV AIDS need inclusion by society.

Thiruvananthapuram: Kerala has become the first Indian state to reserve a government job for HIV positive candidates, a move lauded by NGOs.

The Kerala State AIDS Control Society (KSACS) has invited applications from the graduate candidates suffering from the disease for the post of coordinator with the organization.

The last date for the application is August 16, said the state's Health Secretary Vishwas Mehta.

The candidate should have three years of experience working with HIV related matters.

"This project for which the post has been sanctioned is fully funded by the National AIDS Control Society and the post has been sanctioned for every state.

"But if I am not wrong, Kerala should be the first state to go ahead with the appointment and once appointed the candidate would be a member of the committee of the KSACS," Mehta said.

The advertisement that appeared in all leading national dailies in the state also points out that the candidate should not be part of any network.

The salary for the contract appointment is between Rs.15,000 and Rs.20,000.

According to official figures Kerala has more than 25,000 HIV positive cases, of which around 4,500 are receiving free anti-retroviral therapy in various government run medical colleges in the state.

S.K. Harikumar, who worked previously with KSACS and is now an independent consultant in HIV AIDS and sexual health, said finding a person for the post of the coordinator would not be a problem.

"I myself know several people who are eligible for this post. The biggest advantage in such a post with these specifications is that HIV AIDS is no longer considered as a stigma. This shows that our society has matured," said Harikumar.

State Health Minister P.K. Sreemathi said there are quite a few voluntary organisations in the state which work in HIV AIDS with the support of KSACS who have appointed HIV positive people to work among the affected community.

The job of the coordinator is to establish a network of HIV positive people in all the 14 districts of the state.

Malayalam superstar Mohanlal, who is the state's goodwill ambassador for an AIDS awareness campaign, was elated by the move.

"Every individual in the society has to play his or her part to see that the stigma on HIV positive people is removed once and for all," the actor said.

He said that it was refreshing to know that the government has reserved a job for the patients struck by the disease.