



Transgender Option in Railway Reservation Forms

Why in news?

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- The Railways and Indian Railways Catering and Tourism Corporation Limited (IRCTC) have included “transgender/third gender” as a gender option alongside males and females in the Railway Ticket Reservation Forms.
- The inclusion is in compliance with a April 2014 judgment of the Supreme Court of India in the case of National Legal Services Authority (NALSA) vs. Union of India.

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What was the case about?

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- The Lawyers Collective, a NGO had filed an intervention, on behalf of Ms. Laxmi Narayan Tripathy, a Hijra/transgender activist.
- She sought recognition of self-identified gender of persons, either as male/female/third gender, based on their choice.
- The petitioner alleged violation of Article 14, 15, 19 and 21 of the Constitution of India by the IRCTC, by non-inclusion of “transgender/third gender” as a gender option in its reservation forms.
- They also demanded special coaches and reserved seats for the transgender community in all trains, for their “care and protection”.
- The NALSA in its petition had also sought several directions from the Supreme Court. It includes

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- Granting of equal rights and protection to transgender persons
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- Inclusion of a third category in recording one's sex/gender in identity documents like the election card, passport, driving license and ration card &
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- For admission in educational institutions, hospitals, among others.
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What was the judgment?

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- The apex court directed the Centre and the State governments to recognise transgender as the third sex.
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- It also directed to provide them with the benefits accorded to socially and economically backward classes.
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- The Bench observed that the non-existence of law recognising transgender as the third gender could not be continued to be relied on as a ground to discriminate them in availing equal opportunities in education and employment.
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- It said the Centre and the State governments should\n
 - develop social welfare schemes for the transgender community
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 - run public awareness campaigns to erase the social stigma attached to them, apart from considering carving out job reservations for them.
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Source: The Hindu

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