

## A Welcome Gift for Migrants

In August 2012, the Chief Minister of Kerala directed the state's labour department to distribute goodwill kits to migrants as a gift to celebrate Onam, Kerala's main festival.

Each kit cost approximately ₹ 150 and contained vegetables and various articles such as rice, oil, sugar, tea and red pepper. The kits were intended as a token, in recognition of the contribution of migrants to the state's development. This timely gesture of good will was extended in the midst of a nationwide panic among migrants from north-east India who massively fled from Pune, Bangalore, Hyderabad, Chennai and Goa, fearing backlashes attacks by locals, after violent ethnic clashes erupted between Bodo tribals and Muslims in Kokrajhar, Assam, North East.

"In mid-August, as other States saw them fleeing in large numbers, Kerala quickly doused any attempt to trigger panic among the labourers in the State by announcing a Cabinet decision to thank them instead, through a unique gesture: providing them goodwill kits containing vegetables and provisions as a gift to celebrate Onam with the local people.

Chief Minister Oommen Chandy said the government had meant it to be an 'expression of love and good sentiments' of Malayalis towards the migrant workers and as an assurance that they were part of the population of the State." (Excerpt from Frontline, Vol.29, Issue 18, September 8 – 21, 2012).

Sources: IANS (2012); Krishnakumar (2012)  
Social Inclusion of Internal Migrants in India, UNESCO, 2013

