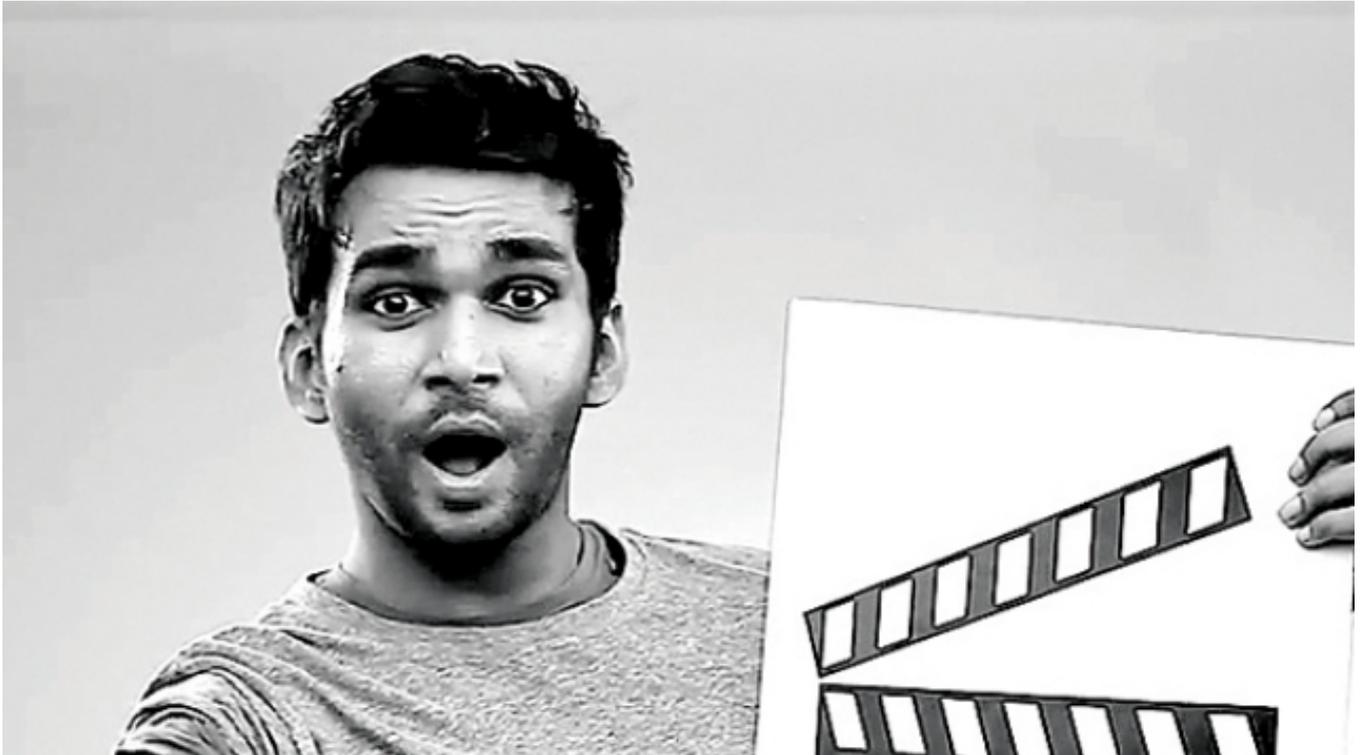


Mr Gay World's India entrant succumbs to pressure, withdraws | Latest News & Updates at Daily News & Analysis



Thahir Mohammed Sayyed, 28

[Yogesh Pawar](#) | Tue, 21 Apr 2015-06:35am , Mumbai , dna

Sayyed and his family had remained incommunicado and couldn't be found at both their Kochi and Kottayam homes.

India's homophobia has cost the country its representation in the Mr Gay World (MGW) 2015 – the international pageant for gay men that seeks to establish ambassadors for LGBTQ and human rights. Over 36 hours after Thahir Mohammed Sayyed (28), the entrant to MGW from Kochi, went into hiding along with his family, he reached out to dna on a social media platform and said: "I am withdrawing from the contest."

I hope the organisers appreciate the difficulties I faced. I cannot take this pressure," he said in a message, refusing to come on the phone. "I have switched off my phone to prevent getting any 'unwanted' calls," he added.

When asked whether he and his family are safe, he said, "It would be unfair for me to drag them into any trouble." He also refused to comment on any ongoing pressure from his community, saying, "Talking about this will only worsen things".

Sayyed and his family had remained incommunicado and couldn't be found at both their Kochi and Kottayam homes. Human rights and LGBT activists in Kerala were alarmed after dna front-paged the plight of this part-time model and fashion designing post-grad from Brisbane, Australia. His family was prevented from praying at the local mosque and threatened with ostracism after his entry into the pageant became public.

Rubbishing claims that he was seeking asylum in South Africa, Sayyed said, "This thought never crossed my mind. I'm the only son of my parents. My sister is married and settled in Doha. How can I too go off, abandoning them?"

Since Kerala's social welfare minister Dr KM Muneer had told dna on Sunday that he would ensure Sayyed and his family faced no problem if they decide to go ahead with his entry, many are raising eyebrows over why the model chose to take such a drastic decision when the pageant was merely a fortnight away. "It's a sad thing that MGW will see a no-show by India because of the way things have worked out," lamented LGBT rights activist Jijo Kurukose of the Queerala network.

Like MGW's Asia director Noemi Alberto, director in Africa and Middle East Atty Coenie Kukkuk has also been receiving several queries from the media in South Africa about Sayyed and his family's safety. "India has been very active in this competition, we really wanted him to share his story with all through MGW 2015. It's really sad that his family has been threatened. Sayyed's withdrawal is 100% understandable. We wish him strength and safety in this situation," said Kukkuk.

TOP