Pride Month

Why in news?

Countries across the world celebrates Pride Month as a celebration of alternative sexual and gender identity.

What is Pride month?

- Every ***June*** is celebrated as Pride month across the world as an occasion for members of the LGBTQ community to mark progress made on legal and social fronts on their rights.
- **Origin -** The history of gay rights in the U.S goes back to 1924, when the Society of Human Rights was founded by Henry Gerber in Chicago.
- The Stonewall riots at 1969 fired up the cause of LGBTQ activism further.
- A young activist called for nationwide protests each June honouring the Stonewall riots.
- New York's first pride march was held in June of 1970, a year after the riots, on what was then called ***Christopher Street Liberation Day***.
- Thousands marched in the parade, starting off in Christopher Street and ending in Central Park's Sheep Meadow.

How other parts of the world celebrates Pride?

- In **the UK**, the first LGBTQ Pride event was held on July 1, 1972 in London and holds a Pride Parade on July 1 every year.
- Around the 1980s, Pride events in the UK focused on the AIDS crisis which ravaged the gay community and also protested Section 28
- In the UK, February is earmarked as LGBT History Month, significant as the month Section 28 was abolished in 2003.
- The Conservative government of the day banned the 'promotion of homosexual lifestyles' in schools under Section 28.
- In **Canada**, different cities may hold pride parades on different days.
- **Berlin** and certain other nations in the European Union celebrate a Pride-equivalent day on July 23, called ***Christopher Street Day***.

LGBT History Month is celebrated in the month of October, while National Coming Out Day is celebrated on October 11.

What is the Pride History in India?

- **Protest -** India's first-ever protests demanding rights for gay individuals happened on

August 11, **1992**.

- It was held by the AIDS Bhedbhav Virodhi Andolan (ABVA) outside ITO Police headquarters in Delhi to protest the arrest of men on the suspicion of homosexuality.
- In **1994**, a medical team sought to look into the high prevalence of same-sex relations reported from Tihar jail.
- While ABVA activists wished to distribute condoms to inmates, the jail authorities refused.
- **Legal protest -** ABVA filed a PIL in the Delhi High Court challenging the constitutional validity of Section 377 of the Indian Penal Code.
- Widely considered one of the first legal protests against government repression of LGBTQ rights in India, was dismissed in 2001.

India held its first pride parade, incidentally also South Asia's first, on July 2, 1999, in Kolkata called the Kolkata Rainbow Pride Walk.

How India decriminalised homosexuality?

- In 2009, the Delhi High Court held in ***Naz Foundation vs Govt. of NCT Delhi*** that treating gay sex between consenting adults as a crime was a gross violation of the fundamental right to privacy.
- **Bill -** In 2015, MP Shashi Tharoor introduced a private member's bill in the Lok Sabha seeking to decriminalize homosexuality by amending ***Section 377*** of the IPC.
- ***Justice K. S. Puttaswamy vs. Union of India*** case set a judicial precedent that helped the legal battles of the LGBTQ community.
- On September 6, 2018, the Supreme Court ruled that Section 377 was unconstitutional.
- It thus legalised "consensual same-sex acts between homosexuals, heterosexuals, lesbians and other sexual minorities."

How is the progress post the Section 377 judgment?

- **Same-sex marriage -** Post the legalisation of same-sex relationships, marriage has been the next battlefront for the community.
- **Legislature -** In April 2022, NCP MP Supriya Sule introduced a private member Bill in Lok Sabha to legalise same-sex marriage in the country.
- **Judiciary -** In June 2022, the Kerala High Court set a trailblazing precedent by allowing a lesbian couple to live together after they were coercively separated by their parents.
- In November 2022, two gay couples filed writ petitions in the Supreme Court seeking legal recognition of same-sex marriages, under the Special Marriage Act, 1954.
- A Constitution Bench began hearing the matter in April 2023, and the Court has now reserved its judgement.
- **Union government -** It has urged the Supreme Court to leave the matter to the Parliament.
- The government stated that the decriminalisation of same-sex relationships does not signify acceptance of same-sex marriage and that this is not in line with Indian society.

- **Medical -** India has also made progress on conversion therapy.
- On August 25, 2022 the National Medical Commission (NMC), banned conversion therapy and calling it “professional misconduct”.

What is the state of LGBTQ+ rights globally?

- LGBTQ+ rights widely vary across the globe, and although several countries have legalised same-sex relationships, fewer nations have legalised same-sex marriage.
- **Decriminalising homosexuality -** All nations in North America and Europe have legalized same-sex behaviour.
- In Asia, it was legal in 20 out of 42 member countries in 2020.
- **Recent -** In August 2022, Singapore announced that the country would repeal Section 377A of its penal code, which criminalised gay sex.
- In December 2022, a Barbados High Court decriminalised homosexuality via an oral ruling.
- In May 2023, the Sri Lankan Supreme Court gave a green light to a Bill seeking to decriminalise homosexuality.
- **Legalising same-sex marriage -** In some countries, gay marriage has been legalised by way of legislation, in others, through judicial pronouncements.
- Some countries, like Montenegro, have recognised same-sex civil unions, while still not legalising marriage.
- At present, same-sex marriage is legal in 34 countries.
- In 2001, the Netherlands became the first country and, in 2019, Taiwan the first Asian country, to legalise same-sex marriage.
- **Recent -** Estonia’s Parliament passed a law legalising same-sex marriage on June 20, 2023, which will come into effect only on January 1, 2024.
- **Homosexuality as crime -** As of November 2020, 6 UN member states (Brunei, Iran, Mauritania, Saudi Arabia, Yemen and Nigeria) still prescribed the death penalty as punishment for homosexual acts.
- In June 2023, post the signing of the Anti-Homosexuality Act of 2023, Uganda has added itself to the list.

As per the ILGA World Database, consensual same-sex sexual activity was not criminalised in 129 countries, while 64 countries still criminalise homosexuality, whether by law or de facto.

Quick Facts

- **Section 377 of IPC -** This section of IPC is a Victorian relic which criminalised sex ‘against the order of nature.’
- **Conversion therapy -** It is a blanket term used for a number of ways, often coercive, used to treat a person attracted to the same sex or of alternate gender identity, to make them heterosexual.
- It can include the use of psychiatric treatment, drugs, exorcism and even violence.
- Conversion therapy may exacerbate mental health conditions, like anxiety, stress and drug use, sometimes leading to suicide.

- **Civil unions or partnerships -** It provides legal recognition to unmarried couples of the same or opposite sex.
- It grants them some of the rights usually associated with marriage like inheritance, medical benefits, employee benefits to spouses, managing joint taxes and finances, and in some cases, adoption.

Reference

1. The Hindu - Tracing the history of Pride and LGBTQ rights in India

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