Press Release
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Priya Dutt joins hands with gay rights activists to show solidarity against discrimination

New Delhi (August 19, 2015): The 3rd National Solidarity Event saw gay rights activists across India come together to consolidate efforts towards the realization of health and human rights for the LGBT community. Policy makers, social welfare officials, UN representatives, members of Parliament, National AIDS Control Organization (NACO) delegates, media, healthcare providers, and civil society also took part in the event.

Organised by India HIV/AIDS Alliance’s Pehchan programme, the event highlighted the continued escalation of violence and discrimination against the LGBT community in India. This year’s Solidarity Event served as a forum for dialogue for different stakeholders from government, civil society and communities to strengthen the movement and create a consensus for a national action plan for the welfare of MSM (Men who have Sex with Men) and other gay men.

Held at the Eros Hotel in Nehru Place, the day’s events included experience sharing, community dialogues, and discussions to create a space within the society that enable access to all services and empower the community. Priya Dutt, Secretary of the INC and ex-MP, affirmed her commitment towards protecting the rights of MSM and the LGBT community more broadly and called for collective action towards this goal.

Prominent gay rights activist Aditya Banopadhyay pointed out, “In our society, the lives of MSM are fraught with social taboos and homophobia. What further compounds the issue is criminalization and infringement of our basic human rights by people, police authorities and the government. The need of the hour is that MSM people should come out of their closets and fights for their rights in solidarity, so that the Legislature is forced to recognize the strength of our population and work towards our collective welfare.”

James Robertson, Executive Director of India HIV/AIDS Alliance, said, “To address the continued vulnerabilities of MSM and gay men in India to HIV and a host of social ills, it will be necessary for all stakeholders across the spectrum to collaborate actively and commit themselves to the task ahead.”

Leaders of the LGBT movement, such as Ashok Row Kavi, Rajesh Srinivas, and celebrities like Sushant Divgikar and Yuvraj Parashar, also spoke about the importance of national forums, such as the solidarity event, in ensuring the collaboration of different stakeholders for strengthening the work that has been done so far and to come out with the plan ahead.

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About Pehchan:
Named for the Hindi word meaning ‘identity,’ ‘recognition’ or ‘acknowledgement,’ the Pehchan programme strengthens and builds the capacity of 200 community-based organisations to provide effective, inclusive and sustainable HIV prevention programming in 18 states in India for more than 450,000 men who have sex with men (MSM), transgenders and hijras. Pehchan is funded by the Global Fund and remains their largest single-country grant to date focused on the HIV response for vulnerable and underserved sexual minorities. Along with Alliance India, the Pehchan consortium includes the Humsafar Trust, Pehchan North Region Office, SAATHI I, Sangama, Alliance India Andhra Pradesh, and SIAAP.

About India HIV/AIDS Alliance:
Founded in 1999, India HIV/AIDS Alliance is a non-governmental organisation operating in partnership with civil society, government and communities to support sustained responses to HIV in India that protect rights and improve health. Complementing the Indian national programme, we build capacity, provide technical support and advocate to strengthen the delivery of effective, innovative, community-based HIV programmes to vulnerable populations affected by the epidemic.

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