

MIST LGBTQ NEWSLETTER



July 2025

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Indian Coming Out Day Celebrated Nationwide with Symbolic Gatherings

Pune, July 2, 2025 – Mist LGBTQ Foundation led heartfelt celebrations of Indian Coming Out Day across India, uniting queer voices in Pune, Jammu & Kashmir, Kanpur, and Dibrugarh. The day marks the anniversary of the landmark 2009 Delhi High Court verdict that first read down Section 377, affirming dignity and freedom for LGBTQIA+ communities.

In Pune, Mist LGBTQ Foundation hosted a symbolic gathering at Kalakar Katta, FC Road. The evening began with a balloon release ceremony, followed by an open circle where participants shared personal journeys of coming out.

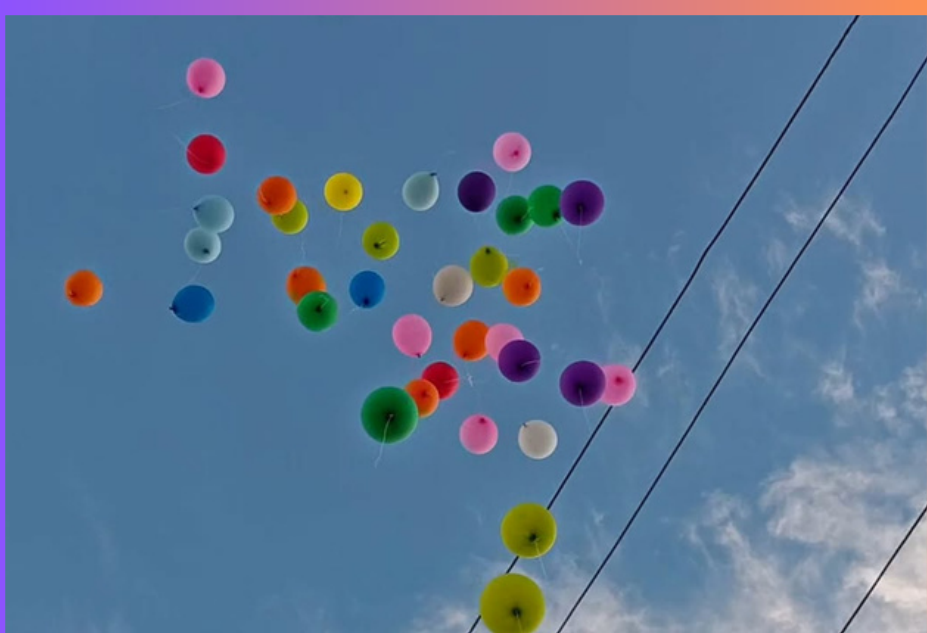
In Jammu & Kashmir, the LGBTQI+ Collective J&K created a rare safe space through a community circle, poetry, and a balloon release – an act especially powerful in a region where queer visibility remains scarce. Kanpur witnessed a vibrant event at Chai Sutta Bar, Saket Nagar, organised by the Kanpur Queer Welfare Foundation in collaboration with Mist. Founders Mx. Anuj Pandey and Mr. Ahsan Ansari emphasised the importance of visibility, acceptance, and solidarity.





Meanwhile, the Dibrugarh Pride Committee in Assam commemorated the day at Dilish Café, Milan Nagar, with balloons symbolising freedom and resilience.

Together, these celebrations amplified a collective message: coming out is both personal truth and political courage – and every story matters. 🌈



Mist LGBTQ Foundation Hosts Awareness Events with IBM in Kolkata & Pune

On July 2, 2025, Mist LGBTQ Foundation organised an impactful LGBTQ awareness through games session at IBM Kolkata, where employees engaged in interactive activities designed to foster understanding and inclusion.

A vibrant flea market featuring six queer-owned businesses accompanied the session, showcasing queer entrepreneurship.

The gamification activities were facilitated by Anil Malla from Mist's QueerBazaar department. The event was hailed as a success, with participants showing both curiosity and respect, reflecting a growing awareness of LGBTQ issues.

Meanwhile, at IBM Pune's Hinjawadi office, Mist collaborated on a special flea market during Career Carnival & Employee Day 2025. Four colourful stalls offered artisanal jewellery, handmade soaps, scented candles, snacks, stickers, and stationery, attracting over 600 visitors.

A life-size Snakes & Ladders game with LGBTQ Q&A added a fun, educational element. Mist was represented by Aditya Bhagat, reinforcing the organisation's mission of promoting inclusion and supporting queer entrepreneurship in corporate spaces. 🌈



Mist LGBTQ Foundation Wins 'Most Supportive & Dedicated LGBTQ+ NPO Initiative 2025 – India'



Mist LGBTQ Foundation has been honoured under the AI Non-Profit Organisation Awards as “Most Supportive & Dedicated LGBTQ+ NPO Initiative 2025 – India.” The recognition reflects years of dedicated work – from protests to parties, testing kits to tough conversations – in standing beside the queer community. For Mist, the award is both a celebration and a reminder to continue building safe, inclusive, and empowering spaces for LGBTQIA+ individuals across the country.

Sriram Sridhar Wins REX Karmaveer Chakra Blue Medal

Sriram Sridhar (he/him), Executive Director of Mist LGBTQ Foundation, has been honoured with the prestigious REX Karmaveer Chakra Blue Medal, instituted by iCONGO in partnership with the United Nations.

A passionate LGBTQ+ rights activist, Sriram has spent over a decade advancing queer rights through health access, advocacy, and cultural initiatives, including the Out & Loud – Pune International Queer Film Festival and QueerBazaar.

This award recognises his relentless work in championing dignity, equality, and empowerment for India’s queer community.



Stories Café: A Legacy of Love and Acceptance

Pune's first queer café, Stories Café, has closed its doors, leaving a void in the hearts of the LGBTQ+ community. This beloved establishment was more than just a café – it was a family, a movement, and a safe space for queer individuals.

Every aspect of the café, from its food to events, reflected queer joy, resilience, and pride, making it a true haven.

A space built with courage, love, and community – thank you for being a part of it. ❤️



This is the end of Stories Café, but not the end of our story.



A Bridge Between Communities

Stories Café played a significant role in bridging the gap between the LGBTQ+ community and the heterosexual population of Pune. It provided a platform for people to understand, engage, and respect queer individuals in a way that textbooks and workshops couldn't.

The café's impact extended beyond its walls, fostering a sense of acceptance and inclusivity in the city.



A Commitment to Creating Safe Spaces

Despite the closure, Mist LGBTQ Foundation, the organization behind Stories Café, remains committed to creating safe spaces for queer persons. The spirit behind the café will live on, and the foundation will continue to work towards its mission.



A Heartfelt Thank You

The team behind Stories Café would like to thank everyone who supported the café during its run. From customers who enjoyed a cup of coffee or a sandwich to those who engaged in meaningful conversations, every individual played a role in building something historic.



Support Mist LGBTQ Foundation: Donate Now to Sustain Critical Operations Amidst Uncertain Times

*When Support Fades,
Solidarity Shines Brighter*

The rollback of DEI policies in the U.S. threatens global support for LGBTQ+ initiatives, including Indian organizations like ours. To sustain our work in healthcare, employment, and advocacy, we seek your support.



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In India, where LGBTQ+ rights are still evolving, and legal protections are limited, the withdrawal of global support could set back many community-driven initiatives that rely on external funding.

As we face uncertain times, we rely on your support to sustain our operations. Mist LGBTQ Foundation has been at the forefront of promoting LGBTQ+ rights and inclusivity in India. Donate to us today and help us continue our critical work, including advocacy, community support, and education.

Your contribution will make a tangible difference in the lives of LGBTQ+ individuals in India.



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