AIMS

* 1). To provide all information related to homosexuality, from India and abroad.
* 2). To put forth all issues related to homosexuality and thereby to provide a forum for debate on these issues.
* 3). To provide homosexuals an opportunity to express their feelings and perceptions related to their own sexuality.
* 4). To enable the homosexuals of Calcutta to participate in the worldwide effort to help homosexuality gain the attention and respect due to it.

NOTE :- The term homosexuality is to be understood to imply homosexuality in all its varied hues, i.e. homosexuality as associated with:

i). Homosexuals who are 'gays' (gay men and gay women or lesbians).
ii). Homosexuals - male or female - who are not 'gays', but have the potential to be 'gay'.
iii). Homosexuals - male or female, 'gay' or not - who are exclusively so or partially so (i.e. bisexuals).

HELLO! While PRAVARTAK seeks to serve all homosexuals, it also aims to be read by those who are not homosexuals, but are interested in or are affected by homosexuality in one way or the other.

QUOTE : You are never given a wish without also being given the power to make it true. You may have to work for it however. — RICHARD BACH

CHANGE: PRAVARTAK turns bi-monthly from this issue onwards. The number of pages goes up from 6 to 10 (and so does the price - oops! - from Rs.4 to Rs.8). It is hoped that the readers will continue to find PRAVARTAK worth reading and help it to grow from strength to strength, through their support. — PD
DEAR READERS,

By now, 1991 is history and we are well into 1992. The year began on a rather mixed note. Not much into January, the sad demise of Siddhartha Gautam filled many hearts with a grief which will be difficult to overcome. In the short personal association I had with him, I discovered in him, an overwhelming zeal - a zeal to struggle for the attention and respect homosexuality deserves. This zeal was part of a larger desire to walk off the beaten track. Unquestioning acceptance of society's conventions was anathema to him.

Siddhartha's family members and all those who cherished knowing him, need strength to bear his physical absence from this world. But is he really absent? My association with him may have been short in duration, but will live long in my memory. In fact, he will live long in the memory of all those who loved him. PRAVARTAK received some encouraging words from him which it will cherish forever.

Rabindranath Tagore had once remarked: "Death is not the end of life; it is its completion". Siddhartha's life has also achieved completion. But the struggle he stood for, best symbolised by the report "Less Than Gay", must go on.

THE MEDIA IS NOT TIRED OF HOMOSEXUALITY:

Last year saw a spate of articles on homosexuality in several publications. The trend, more or less, continues. At least one English daily in the city continues to publish articles on homosexuality. In this sense, 1992 commenced on an upbeat mood. It is now up to the homosexuals (gay or not) of the city, to do their bit to keep the issue alive. One way to do so is to write letters to editors (anonymous if desired), commenting on the articles published. So, gung ho readers, to make '92 a gay year!

With belated best wishes for 1992,

Pawan Dhall

---

ENQUIRIES FOR THE ABVA REPORT:

Readers interested in procuring copies of the ABVA report: "Less Than Gay" may write to: PAWAN, POST BOX 9162, CALCUTTA-16. (PLEASE DO NOT SEND YOUR ENQUIRIES TO THE ADDRESS GIVEN IN THE LAST ISSUE.)
AIDS WATCH

AIDS disconer

New York (AP): The American co-discoverer of the AIDS virus is being investigated anew, this time on perjury and patent fraud allegations, The New York Times reported in Monday. Investigators are looking into whether Dr Robert Gallo made false statements in his patent application for a test for detecting the AIDS virus.

Keeping AIDS virus at bay

Relaxation and aerobic exercise may strengthen the immune system and lengthen the lives of people infected with HIV, the virus that causes AIDS. In a new study at the University of Miami Medical School, men who practiced relaxation techniques or did aerobics regularly had higher blood levels of CD4 cells, the immune system cells that are attacked by the AIDS virus. And two years later, those who had exercised more often stayed healthier longer. The average levels for helper cells in those practicing relaxation techniques was 482 cells per cubic millimeter of blood. The counts increased in a week to the average level of 651.

Think and Feel:

AIDS is a disease, not a disgrace.

Farewell to a Champion

(Excerpts from the article "So Long Freddie" by "Jayaditya Gupta", published in "The Statesman" on 14/12/91).

"The death of Freddie Mercury from bronchopneumonia brought to an end the career of one of rock music's most towering personalities. Earthy, dynamic, loud, powerful, flamboyant, Mercury was a gifted vocalist who with his character and charisma did not even need the voice he had."

"Mercury's life offstage was of extremes. To celebrate his 41st birthday, he hired a plane and flew 80 friends to Spain where he took over an exclusive hotel and threw a lavish party."

"But he was generally a quiet man, not given to granting interviews, staying out of the limelight. He was a self-confessed bisexual, which brought him more publicity when the AIDS scare began, but he took it all in his stride. It would do well to remember one of Mercury's own sayings: "I certainly don't have any aspirations to live to 70. It would be boring."
Books Worth a Read, Available at the British Council Library, Calcutta.
(The books have at least a significant content of homosexuality, even if homosexuality may not be the central theme of the story.)

2. The Life to Come and other stories - E.M. Forster. (A collection of 14 short stories by Forster, 8 of which have a homosexual element in them.)
3. Act of Darkness - Francis King. (This book has an element of female homosexuality, which may even be said to be the most important element of the story as well. There is a reference to male homosexuality also.)
5. Coming to Terms - Robert Montagu.

Films with an Element of Homosexuality......
1. My Beautiful Laundrette.
2. Prick Up Your Ears.
3. Caravaggio.
4. An Early Frost.
5. We Think the World of You.

And, Some T.V. Serials.
1. The Jewel in the Crown.
2. Oscar Wilde.
3. Intimate Contact.

*** Helpful Tip: If possible, get a connection for Star T.V., and watch a number of gay films, discussions about gay issues, etc.. Try and make non-gay persons see them too!

It Makes Sense!!

- Unscramble the following jumbles, a letter to each square, to form ordinary words.

  1. SOLCET
  2. NKIP
  3. NYLAM
  4. EMLA

- Now arrange the circled letters to form the surprise answer, as suggested by the clue below:

  Clue: This may happen in bed at night!

  Answer:

- Solution in the next issue.

- Solution to Issue #2 "IMS":

  A Bombay Male.
LAUGH!

Two couples who had been great friends since they had gotten married decided to share a Rocky Road in vacation. They pitched two tents and cooked their dinners over a campfire. When it came to sleeping, one couple remarked that the other's tent was too close. The other couple said, "It's just a friendly gesture." The other couple disagreed and said, "I haven't had such a great time in years."

Dear Pinky

Pinky, dear. There are more than 500 gays in Los Angeles and none of them are politicians.

Pinky: "How can they be so, Pinky?"

Pinky: "So what? Don't you know that they have only one sexuality that is WIELICRY? They have orgasms only when they see votes."

2) If a person has one or two sexual experiences with someone of the same sex, he is gay.

3) The American Psychiatric Association stated that homosexuals are sick.

4) Homosexuals can be legally married to each other under the law in the US.

5) Most homosexuals try to convert young people into becoming gay.

6) Children raised by gay parents (or gay people) usually become homosexuals themselves.

How did you score? No two quizzes, but all 6 statements are TRUE.

Pinky: "I have at least some learning to do.

SOURCE: Modified from a clipping from an American publication, sent by Don P. Baken, Japan."
CONT'D. from the 2nd. issue. Yes, he had broken the trust Romeesh had placed in him, and which in fact he had earned. But, Sumaat had been a momentary attraction. A banal one. A passing phase - if at all a period of three days could be regarded as a phase. Romeesh had never been out of his mind. Just pushed to the background. Much like the moon hidden by clouds, but still making its presence felt in the night sky.

At that time Varun hadn't been sincere in apologising. A recklessness had gripped him. He had forgotten he would be lonely again, the one thing he dreaded. Even when he and Romeesh had turned their backs on each other, he should have questioned himself. For whom himself? For Sumaat? What was he doing this for? For what was he heading for? Everything - minus what was it that he had somehow his mind import of his own act.

All he had managed was a dark corridor. And he had been forced into darkness. So, he had. Today he would emerge from the corridor. To be with Romeesh. To be near him. To show him that he had suffered in betraying him. He wanted to fall at his feet and cry his heart out.

But what if Romeesh had changed his mind? The very thought sent his heart racing. Very soon he was facing Romeesh's home.

He waited a while at the door-step. Heart thumping and mouth run dry. The moment of reckoning was fearfully near.

Some voices from inside prevented him from ringing the bell. They sounded quite near the door. Probably Romeesh was talking to someone about to leave.

"When do I see you next?" It sounded so much like Romeesh.

"As soon as you would like to." This, from somebody with a heavy voice. Undoubtedly male.

A silence followed. To Varun's straining ears, it sounded very intimate. He frowned as he concentrated. The speakers were now nearly whispering.

And this is where, dear readers, we leave Varun - until the next issue.
What do you make out of this diagram? Two overlapping circles with lots of crazy patterns in them? Well, that is true. But it also symbolises something else.

Let us suppose that the two circles represent the whole population of the world. Circle A represents the homosexuals and Circle B represents the heterosexuals. Now, isn't that a rather simple classification with regard to sexual orientation? After all, the world is not made up of exclusively homosexual and exclusively heterosexual people only. That is precisely why the circles overlap. And there is a whole lot of variety in the overlapping area. Why not go through the index below and see if you can place yourself anywhere within the circles? Surely you will be able to do so. Each one of us is part of this world, whatever be our sexual orientation. Isn't there a saying that "it takes all kinds to make this world"?

**INDEX:**

* : Set of exclusively homosexual people.
- : Set of exclusively heterosexual people.
* : Set of people who are as much homosexual as heterosexual, i.e. those who are bisexuals.
- : Set of bisexuals, but predominantly homosexual.
- : Set of bisexuals, but predominantly heterosexual.

(Can you think of any more sets? Can the diagram be revised in any way?)

**NOTE:**

i). The sizes of the different shaded areas are not proportional to the number of people which may fall in the category symbolised by those areas.

ii). Would you agree that the * marked sets form one big set of GAY people (actual and potential), while the unmarked ones form one big set of NON-GAY people?

**WISDOM:** A one-track mind is all right. If it is on the right track.
HOMOPHOBIA, HOMELESSNESS AND GUTS

The person - a gay of Calcutta, in his mid-twenties and working for his family business. The incident - his elder brother coming to know about his being homosexual and about his involvement in bringing together the homosexuals of the city. The fall-out - his brother telling him that he would rather not have a brother like him. The final outcome - the young man walking out of his home, and the family business.

All that has been written above is true and not just a story. It is all about homophobia in one brother's mind and guts in the other. How many young people, let alone young homosexuals, can do that? When he walked out of his home, it was not that he had any options about staying somewhere or working somewhere in sight. It was simply that after the insult and hurt given him by his brother, it was out of question for him to stay at home. It would mean compromising on his integrity and on his identity (as a gay person), which he is fiercely proud of.

This is not a clarion call for all homosexuals in trouble with regard to their sexuality to walk out of their homes. But the young man's action is the best example to show that the time for homosexuals to assert the validity of their sexuality, in any way possible, has come. – PD

Announcement for a personal profile column: "I AM"

Dear Readers: Do you want to reach out to others, make friends in different places and enjoy knowing others and them knowing you? Well, then get hold of a pen and some paper and send us a detailed write-up about yourselves. REMEMBER, you get half a page slot to advertise yourselves. So write all that you think others should know about you. Try writing as if you are writing to someone for the first time. For instance, you can write what you expect in a friendship and what you can give in a friendship. Of course, you can write about your hobbies, career and studies also. A space of half a page means you have the scope to present yourselves in as creative a manner as possible. ARE YOU GAME? IF YES, THEN GET GOING!

But please note TWO points: 1) PRAVARTAK reserves the right to decide what is fit to be printed and what is not. Editing for reasons of space may also be necessary. 2) Repeating the advertisement in subsequent issues may not be possible. Moreover, if you do not want your ad repeated, be sure to let us know.

*** Address your letters to PAWAN, POST BOX 9162, CALCUTTA - 700 015.
At the world's first condom museum!

Ribbed, nubbed, all shapes and sizes in red, green, blue—even in different flavours. And always delicately thin. That, at least, is how condoms are these days. There are plenty on display in what the initiators claim is the world's first condom museum, which has opened in the German city of Cologne. Plus somewhat older versions.

The legendary Cretan king Minos was said to have used goat bladder for what must be among the first mentions in the history of condoms. However, he apparently used them for protection against venereal disease, just as the massive publicity campaigns of today recommend their use to prevent the contracting of AIDS. But the first scientifically-proven use of the condom—a rather robust model of linen, complete with draw-string—came in 1564 in a treatise by the Italian doctor Gabriele Fallopi, entitled 'De Morbe Gallice' (on the Gallic sickness).

The linen version and examples from ensuing times are all on display in the Cologne museum, though not in the original versions. "We had reproductions made," says co-founder Oliver Gothe. The museum was set up with the backing of a local AIDS advice centre in a shop specialising in male contraceptives called Condomi, one of the first such shops in Germany set up three years ago. "Our women customers put us onto the idea," says Gothe. Women, comprising 60 percent of customers, wanted to know more about the origin of what they were buying.

No one knows for sure just where the word itself originates. Some say it comes from the Latin "condus" (container), others say that it comes from a 17th century doctor, Joseph Condom, who instructed a member of the nobility on the use of his namesake. It was around this time that the more sensitive models first made their appearance, made from sheep's intestines—a technique still used today for persons allergic to rubber, says Gothe.

The beginning of the 20th century saw mass production begin, made possible by the process of rubber vulcanisation developed by the American Charles Goodyear. This made condoms more affordable than before when only the really wealthy availed themselves of the expensive "Capotes Anglaises" (English Bonnets)—sometimes made of velvet and silk.

Manufacturing refinements have meanwhile reduced rubber thicknesses from 0.3 of a millimetre in the 19th century to today's 0.05, or even the 0.02 of one Japanese model. "That's six times thinner than human skin," says Gothe. However, social acceptance has hardly kept pace with the technical progress made. A law banning condoms in America was passed in 1873 and stayed in force for nearly a century.

They suffered a similar fate in Britain, while a ban on trade and sales was imposed in Germany in 1922, and vending machines were not allowed until 1970. Even today there is resistance to too blatant condom sales in parts of Germany. When operators tried to open another Cologne-style condom shop in Munich, outraged citizens loudly protested.
Cold light on Lawrence’s Judas

From John Ezard

London, Nov. 30: In 1922 D.H. Lawrence agreed to write what was expected to be a tribute to a dead friend. With friends like Lawrence, it turned out, the deceased had no need of enemies.

The novelist produced a 59-page memoir of the adventurer Maurice Magnus, calling him a “Judas” and accusing him of not repaying loans. This provoked a mutual friend, the author Norman Douglas, to write a famous counterblast, titled A Plea For Better Manners.

But Douglas never knew the worst. In his manuscript, Lawrence revealed that the friend had paid for sex from young male prostitutes in the Foreign Legion.

The 1,500-word passage was cut by Lawrence’s London publisher, Martin Secker, because of its explicitness. But the full manuscript was revealed to 140 Lawrence scholars attending a conference at Nottingham University at the weekend.

The university has bought it for an undisclosed sum, with aid from Britain’s National Heritage Memorial Fund and the Victoria and Albert Museum Purchase Fund. “It is a great coup for it to come to this country,” Peter Preston, conference convenor, said. Lawrence himself thought it the best piece he had done up till then.

The memoir was intended as a preface to a reminiscence of the Foreign Legion by Magnus, who had committed suicide. In it, Magnus expressed shock about fellow legionnaires having love affairs with youths.

Lawrence’s censored passage opens: “Reading this again makes me stone-cold to this pink-faced, self-indulgent, morally indignant pigeon. The vice which he holds up his hands so horrified at ... he had it himself... both love and money he got from uneducated men with warm-blood, his inferiors.” After quoting Magnus as saying that he tried to keep “physical friendships as decend as possible,” Lawrence adds: “Just so, filching the blood warmth from the lower-class and sailing on bland and superior...

“The little Judas, he betrayed everybody with a kiss. Cold as a bit of white mud... To my mind he is worse than the poor devils of legionnaires. They had their blood-pensions and carried them flagrantly to depravity. But Magnus... kept up appearances.”

Mr Preston commented: “It is the kind of memoir you would expect your worst enemy to write. Perhaps he found Magnus a disturbing figure in some ways.”

Gay news

Gay adoptions

Key West (Florida) (AP): A county judge ruled unconstitutional a state law barring homosexuals from adopting children, a move a civil liberties official said could make it easier for gay people throughout Florida to start families. The court ruling, said on Monday that the 14-year-old law violates the state and Federal constitutional rights to privacy, equal protection and due process.

Gay plea

New York (AP): A group of Irish homosexuals is asking a federal judge to ban the city’s St. Patrick’s Day parade unless they are allowed to march. The Irish lesbian and gay organisation argued that the ancient order of Hibernians, the parade’s organisers, discriminated against homosexuals in violation of federal law. By barring them from the march.

A gay mix-up

Pasadena, California (AP): In a story on Sunday about a protest held outside the All Saints Episcopal Church because of a ritual performed there last month for two gay men, the Associated Press erroneously identified the ritual as a wedding ceremony. In fact, the ceremony was not a marriage service, but rather a blessing of the union of the two men.

The protest on Sunday was by a group of Christian fundamentalists.