

## **'No one dying for want of marriage certificates': Centre to HC on same sex marriage plea**

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*The reply was in response to three petitions filed last year*

**New Delhi (India):** Seeking adjournment of petitions praying for recognition of same-sex marriages under existing law, the Centre on Monday told the Delhi High Court that there are other urgent matters that need consideration and that "nobody is dying because they don't have a marriage certificate."

Appearing for Centre, Solicitor General Tushar Mehta submitted before the court that the state is dealing with a pandemic at present and there are other urgent matters which need consideration. "As a government, our focus in terms of urgency is on urgent, imminent issues," submitted Mehta, adding that law officers are also dealing with pandemic-related cases.

Senior Advocate Saurabh Kirpal, representing some of the petitioners, told the court that the government is supposed to be neutral and the court has to determine urgency. Senior Advocate Dr Menaka Guruswamy, who also represents some of the petitioners, told the court that there are 70 million LGBTQ people in this country.

During the hearing, Mehta also raised the question of roster change before the bench headed by Justice Rajiv Sahai Endlaw. The court, while listing the matter for hearing on July 6, asked the Centre to seek clarification regarding the question of the roster.

The reply was in response to three petitions filed last year. In one of the petitions, Dr Kavita Arora, a psychiatrist, and Ankita Khanna, a therapist, sought enforcement of the fundamental right to choice of partner, after their application for solemnisation of marriage under the Special Marriage Act was rejected by a Marriage Officer in Delhi on the ground that they are a same-sex couple.

The second petition was filed by Parag Vijay Mehta, an Overseas Citizen of India cardholder, and Vaibhav Jain, an Indian citizen, who got married in Washington DC in 2017 and whose application for registration of marriage under the Foreign Marriage Act was rejected by the Consulate General of India at New York.

The third PIL, for recognition of same-sex marriages under the Hindu Marriage Act, was filed by defence analyst Abhijit Iyer Mitra and three others.

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